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THE CITIZEN WRITER IN RETROSPECT

Albert Maltz

Interviewed by Joel Gardner

VOLUME II

Completed under the auspices  
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TAPE NUMBER: XIV, SIDE ONE

November 8, 1978

MALTZ: I had to postpone that project, and although I didn't know it at the time, it turned out to be forever. And I turned to the material that was to become my second novel, The Cross and the Arrow.

The Cross and the Arrow in a way began from an intellectual concern of mine. At that time in the war there were a great many people who accepted the attitude of an Englishman, Lord [Nicholas] Vansittart, I believe (I'm not sure of the spelling), who argued that there was something in the nature of the German people that had led them to make war in 1870 and in 1914 and again in 1939, and that as a people they were destined always to be war makers, and that therefore, when the war was over and the Allies had won, the Germans had to be curbed forever in such ways that they could never again make a war. Now, without denying what the Nazi war machine had done (and I would say, in parentheses, although at that time we did not know of the existence of the death camps in Europe, we did know of enough atrocities to be horrified), it was nevertheless counter to all of my beliefs as a Marxist to accept that there was something genetically in the nature of the German people which destined them always to be war makers. Marxism repudiates racism of any kind.





And so I had been giving a good deal of time to thinking on this question and to reading about it, and it was the intellectual platform from which my novel began to evolve.

However, before I went to work on it I worked on a voluntary basis for a week and a half on something that was quite fascinating, a documentary short film called Moscow Strikes Back. This was tremendously vivid footage taken by Russian combat photographers in the tremendous battle which had seen the Soviet forces throw back the Nazi armies in front of Moscow, and it was the first defeat that the Nazis had suffered in the war. However, the footage was somewhat random, and the commentary that they had sent did not fit properly: there was no unity to the commentary and the scenes. But there was enough there for me to go to work on it. And it was a new experience for me to work with a moviola. I would sit all day and most evenings running the film back and forth and, using their commentary as a guide, write my own commentary. So that I took the somewhat scattered footage and unified it and tied it together by my commentary, and it came out as a whole. It was a very successful job. Edward G. Robinson was brought in to read the commentary, which he did very well, and it was released immediately and played very widely. It later received an Academy award for distinctive achievement in documentaries.



From the middle of June until the middle of October I worked on The Cross and the Arrow, which I conceived first as a novelette. When I finished it, however, I did not submit it to my publisher because, first, my wife was very critical of it and I respected her opinion; and then I took it East, where I had other friends read it. I didn't go East for that purpose but for another, but I used the opportunity, and their analysis and comments about the novelette made me see its possibilities as a larger work. And I decided to reconceive it.

My trip East came about because I had been offered a very special film job. Some refugee from Europe, a film man, wanted to take the famous Eisenstein movie Potemkin and add a frame to it so that it would be told in a contemporary setting, and he wanted to dub it, the dialogue, into English so that it could be shown widely in theaters in the United States. And he offered the magnificent sum of \$600 a week for me, and I was very happy to take it and very fascinated to try and do the job. I worked on it for about four and a half weeks and did the work, but it never did find much of a market.

GARDNER: That's very interesting because. . . .

MALTZ: It was called Seeds of Freedom, by the way.

GARDNER: Right. That's very interesting because in looking through the Times reviews of your films, the





Times is very enthusiastic about much of the film, but it played at the Stanley, I believe--didn't it?--which is not [inaudible] New York.

MALTZ: I have no idea.

GARDNER: But they said that the writing by Albert Maltz has strength and heart. I don't know whether you recall that or not.

MALTZ: No, I don't. I don't believe I kept any reviews of it or saw any. Well, of course, Potemkin is a fine film, and I believe I've seen it recently on TV, and I don't know in the entire history of movies a more graphic cinema scene than the . . .

GARDNER: The Odessa steps?

MALTZ: . . . the Odessa steps scene. That is just an incredible piece of cinema making. I know nothing that I think surpasses it, and I don't know if anything equals it. Just extraordinary.

I then returned to Los Angeles and worked at reconceiving The Cross and the Arrow. My agent arranged for another leave of absence for me from Paramount and I worked through 'til March of 1943 on the novel. At that time Paramount did what was a custom in the film industry: they loaned me to Warner Brothers, which paid \$500 a week to Paramount while Paramount continued paying me \$300. [laughter] And this was for a novel called Deep Valley, which was





interesting material and was designed for Humphrey Bogart and Ida Lupino and involved, I know, a big forest fire.

Now, due to what was going on, I had now a real fear that I would be inducted into the army before I had been able to finish the novel. And so I set up a work procedure which was one in which I worked intensively on my screenplay from the moment I arrived at the studio, which was ten o'clock in the morning (I was in a car pool with other writers), and I would finish the amount of work expected of a writer, which was a certain number of pages a day, by about one o'clock or two o'clock. From then on, after lunch I would work on my novel. And I proceeded to discourage, with success, the kind of visiting that writers tended to do in studios where they would go from office to office for a chat. I also avoided lunch at the writers' table in Warner Brothers, which was full of very bright, fast-talking men like Phil and Julius Epstein, and others, who would keep the jokes going. I would go out after I finished the screen work and go to a lunch room where the grips and others ate and nobody was there I knew, and I would be able to eat lunch and read something. Then I would take a walk, a short walk, around the studio's grounds, and then I'd go back and work on my novel. I kept this up for two months, but then before it was completed I was switched



to work on the film Destination Tokyo. . . .

GARDNER: Before you get into that--because I know you're going to have a lot to say about that film--in working on The Cross and the Arrow, were you the sort of novelist who had the whole thing mapped out? You had the complete structure and filled in, scene by scene, as you would have in the play?

MALTZ: Well, no, not as detailed as a play, but I always did plan. I would plan out the general story; I would plan out individual scenes; I would plan out characterization. I had to do research for The Cross and the Arrow, but that was not too difficult. I might say, since it comes up at this moment, that people have asked me how it was that I could write about Germany in that period. Well, I limited my book--my book took place in, I believe, the summer of 1942. Now, there had been American reporters in Germany as late as December 5, 1941, and they had written about it. Then there were Swedish and other neutral reporters in Germany after the summer of '42, and they wrote about it while I was still working on my novel. There were also very useful sources in religious magazines, interdenominational, which had representatives in Germany who would meet from time to time in Switzerland, where they would publish monthly reports on what was going on in Germany. So that, with one exception,





it proved that my facts were accurate, and I found this out later when my book was published in Germany--the work was accurate.

In addition, I myself, out of my own cultural background, was able to write about the German scene which I had visited in Germany, although never really lived there, never lived there, but I was able to write about it with a sense of feeling I was writing truthfully in a way that I would not have been if I had, let's say, tried to write about Sweden. I just felt that way. And also, I had known Germans and I had known German refugees, and the material was at hand. I also had the assistance of a former member of the Nazi party who had come here as an exchange student and had remained here because he didn't want to continue on in Germany, and he told me a great deal about the structure of the Nazi party, so that I knew that and the thinking of Nazi party members, about which I asked him; he was a man whose sister was married to a Jew.

GARDNER: What was his name?

MALTZ: His name is Peter Pohlenz, very nice man, and his sister and brother-in-law were on the St. Louis, which was in the film . . .

GARDNER: The Voyage of the Damned?

MALTZ: . . . The Voyage of the Damned. They were landed



finally in Holland and, when the Germans came, were in a concentration camp--or they were put into a concentration camp by the Germans. But they survived.

So that I had the materials I needed to work on this book. I did plan, and planned very carefully, but at the same time--and this is true of plays too--new ideas would come in the course of writing, and I would follow the new ideas if they seemed to me right. But I was not one of those writers--and there are some--who have just a main idea and begin writing immediately without any planning. I have such a friend, and she can write 700 pages and then she says, "Now I'll look at it and see what kind of a book I want to write." Then she may cut it down to 400 and change it, and so on. I don't work that way.

GARDNER: Fine. Destination Tokyo. . . .

MALTZ: Yes, I was called in to work on Destination Tokyo by Jerry Wald, who had known my work and had, I found out, tried to buy the short story "Happiest Man on Earth" because he thought he could make a feature film out of it. And the film script of Destination Tokyo had been written by a writer now directing his first film, Delmer Daves. It was based upon an idea, a short treatment by someone else, and Daves had gone up to a submarine base in the San Francisco area and gotten all of the technical material and had written a story that hung together. But





as Jerry Wald said, and Daves agreed, it lacked certain dramatic qualities, it lacked certain characterization, it lacked certain things in content. And Wald had asked that I be put on it. I read the material and made suggestions as to what I might do to it, and this was accepted by both of them.

I might say about them that Jerry Wald was a man who probably had only completed high school. He was very much a New Yorker character--a New York City character who had been one of the people who submitted things to Walter Winchell. He had come out as a writer in some way or another and had been one of Ben Hecht's "boys" whom Hecht had doing first drafts of scripts for him, which he would later rewrite. And Wald had become a writer and had done some work, but then had become a producer, which was his real field because he was a man with a superabundance of ideas, some of them excellent, some not, but he was always churning. He sought to do good dramatic and important material. He had taste. And he was a prodigious worker. And if a writer had enough self-confidence to say to him, "That's good and that's bad," then the two could get along very well; if the writer was lacking in confidence, then that would be bad because, inwardly, Wald was also lacking in confidence, and he would get very anxious then. But I worked very well with Wald and liked him.



Delmer Daves was a man of very different quality. He had graduated from Stanford. He had become an attorney but had then gone into film work. He was a man of many interests, a photographer, metallurgist, he had studied art, and he was, on the whole, excellent to work with.

Destination Tokyo, at the time I came on it, had a shooting date and the leading actors were already cast-- Cary Grant and John Garfield. And so I had to abandon work on my novel, and I worked on Destination Tokyo evenings as well as days. The rewrite took four weeks and went into production immediately. One example of content which I supplied and which made for a useful piece of characterization, and for drama, was interesting-- is an interesting example of what I said earlier, that writers write out of what they are.

There was a scene in Destination Tokyo in which, when the submarine is somewhere in the Aleutian Islands, I believe, above water, waiting to make contact with a plane that will bring to it some special officer who has a special mission to perform, the submarine is attacked by a Japanese bomber. And although the plane is shot down, a bomb lodges in the body of the submarine and does not explode. Now, I'm not absolutely positive of this, but I think it was something like this. The Japanese pilot. . . . I don't want to go into this anymore because I may be in error, and I don't want to bother to read the script,





but I can just say this: a character played by Dane Clark, by something he did, fell into strong disfavor with the other members of the crew, and these two events--the bomb in the body of the submarine, and the character--give some examples of, first, what I did on the script and, second, of a political point that I was going to make. In the case of the bomb in the body of the plane, Daves had so written it that the captain sent a young, slender sailor who could wedge himself into a certain narrow area and get out the fuse of the bomb, because without that there was danger that it would explode at any moment. But in the Daves script the audience didn't see this happen. I changed it so that we saw the scene and we saw the man going in and we saw the bomb, and it dramatized the danger. And, at a given moment, he started to turn the fuse the wrong way, and the captain said, "No, counterclockwise!" or "Clockwise!" or something like that. And the guy said, "Yes, sir, I said it wrong but I knew the right way to do it." And the whole crew--we dwelt on the tension in the crew, because it was life or death if he got that fuse out. So that that was a way of taking something that happened off scene and making it dramatic by putting it on scene. But secondly, the character played by Dane Clark at a given moment says, in effect, "You want to know why I did what I did?" And he proceeded



to talk about the fact that he was Greek and that he had an uncle who was killed by the Nazis, who was a professor, a brainy man, an educated man, not like him, and he was killed because the Nazis didn't want there to be any thinking people in the countries they conquered, and that's the kind of people they were, and that's why he did what he did. And so his saying that was dramatic, and it changed the attitude of the other men on the crew toward him. But I could write that because of my understanding of what had gone on, of what was going on in the war . . .

GARDNER: Right.

MALTZ: . . . whereas someone else with a different understanding would not have thought of that.

GARDNER: Right.

MALTZ: And that's a good example.

GARDNER: An interesting point.

MALTZ: When that rewrite was finished, I returned to the Deep Valley film and to part-time work on my novel. And it was during this time that my Paramount contract came to an end, and Warner Brothers now started to pay me the \$500 that it'd been paying to Paramount. In the last days of August I got notice from my draft board to take my physical for induction. I did it and passed it, and I had just enough money saved to finish the book,



and I refused an offer that Jerry Wald gave me to write what later became Pride of the Marines. This was a very fine piece of material that I'll discuss later, in spite of its awful title. And I know he was very upset with me for that because that project was dear to him, but I tried to explain that I had to finish my novel, and I went off. I then went to work on the novel every day and every evening of the week.

At that time I asked for a leave of absence from party branch meetings. That was necessary because, while people missed meetings for one reason or another, if they missed them for a succession of meetings without any explanation, the branch chairman would always want to know why and would pay a visit. And I explained why and the matter went up higher, and then I had a session with Jack Lawson in which he felt I should not take a leave of absence, that it was not a good thing to do, that it was a bad precedent and so on. And he had a phrase that used to exasperate the hell out of me: he would say, "You can do that as well as go to branch meetings. It's all a matter of how you organize your time." If you said to him, "I don't have time to do this and this and this," he'd say, "It's all a matter of how you organize your time." And with that little magic wand, he presumably settled everything. And I





just said, "No, I'm not going to go to branch meetings," and it became such an issue that I was summoned to a meeting downtown where the Los Angeles Communist party functioned. I don't know any longer whom I met with--there were three or four people as well as Lawson--and they just did everything to persuade me, and I said, "No, I want to finish this book and I may be inducted," and so on, and I just held to my position. So far as I recall, they held to theirs, but there was nothing they were going to do about it. They didn't want to expel me for that and so I didn't go to branch meetings. There was an interesting example of Lawson's rigidity in this.

And by the end of '43 I did receive an induction notice from my draft board with a January date, and this came just about the time I had finished the novel and sent it off to my publisher. [tape recorder turned off] In January 1944 I went to Boston to see my editor, Angus Cameron, about my novel. I think I might pause for a moment to talk about Cameron.

He was generally acknowledged at that time to be one of the best editors in publishing. He was a vice-president of Little, Brown, and we were friends as well as having a professional relationship. It is interesting that after the blacklist came along, Cameron's



position did not protect him from being booted out of Little, Brown and Company because he refused to stop certain political activities that he had been carrying on. Cameron was a very, very bright and thoughtful man who combined with his sagacity as an editor a great love of hunting and fishing and of the outdoors, and I understand that when at times things might get too high-pressured for him in his work, he would simply leave and be found next in Idaho or Canada with a gun or a reel in his hand. In any instance, Cameron liked my book but had suggestions that I accepted for cutting and revisions, and I then immediately went to New York City to see my draft board in Queens.

GARDNER: Let me just interject for a second. Who were some of the other writers . . .

MALTZ: At Little, Brown?

GARDNER: . . . that Angus Cameron dealt with?

MALTZ: Oh, that Angus dealt with?

GARDNER: Would you know, offhand?

MALTZ: I would. Let's turn off a second while I think of the names. [tape recorder turned off] To answer your question. . . .

GARDNER: I don't think your. . . . [tape recorder turned off]

MALTZ: Thank you. Little, Brown and Company was one





of the most successful publishing firms in the country. It was based in Boston. Among the authors that Cameron would have dealt with at that time were A.J. Cronin, James Hilton, John P. Marquand, Howard Fast . . . they were a big-selling house.

I went to the draft board because of the fact that I'd received notice of induction. I explained that I had a novel on which I'd spent a great deal of time and that I had six weeks of revisions that needed to be made. I told them that I was completely ready to go into service and was not in any way trying to evade service, but I asked for the six weeks of extension and this was given to me. I was told that I would get another notice as soon as the six weeks were up.

I returned to Los Angeles immediately, rewriting in the compartment on the train, and I finished the revisions in time and started to arrange my personal affairs for leaving for service. But just then a new regulation went into effect limiting draftees to the age of twenty-nine, and since I was thirty-five, that meant that there would be no military service for me. [tape recorder turned off]

Destination Tokyo had opened in New York, just when I was there, to wonderful press notices. It was listed as one of the ten best films of 1944 by Crowther



of the New York Times, and it did very well at the box office. I finished the manuscript of-- When I finished the manuscript of The Cross and the Arrow, I returned immediately to Warner Brothers to work on the story of Al Schmid, the blind marine, which Jerry Wald was producing.

GARDNER: Had he given you the. . . ?

MALTZ: Wald had wanted me to do this film before I left Warner's to work on The Cross and the Arrow in October of the previous year, but I had refused it. He had put another writer on the story in the interim, and a screenplay had been written, but Wald was not satisfied with it. And I was very glad to go back to the project because the material was wonderful. It concerned a very average young factory worker living in Philadelphia who had joined the marines in a burst of unthinking patriotism immediately after Pearl Harbor, and who had fought very bravely and been decorated in the battle of Guadalcanal, but who had been blinded. And when that happened, he had few resources to fall back on, facing his life. And since his patriotism had been really one of unthinking enthusiasm, he was not ready to pay the price that some men have to pay in wartime. (I will mention that my salary went to \$600 a week at this time, and I will keep mentioning what



happened in that area as we go along.) I worked very hard on the story and finished a screenplay by mid-August.

Since the House Committee on Un-American Activities raised the phony charge that Communists had been putting subversive material into films, I think it is worthwhile to pause over one scene in Destination--in Pride of the Marines (which became the title of this Al Schmid story) because, of any scene in the film, this is one where critics might have said, "That's where Maltz tried to get in some propaganda." It was a scene in a base hospital in San Diego where soldiers, recovering from wounds, were in a room where billiards--where pool was being played, and they began to talk about their anxieties in reference to returning to civilian life. They wondered whether there would be jobs for them, and they wondered what the country was going to be like, and so on. There's no question but that it was a scene with very direct political overtones. Now, this was a scene that I had not had in my screenplay, but Jerry Wald had suggested the scene to me because he felt that the film needed to say things about the contemporary scene. And I resisted putting it in because I felt that it would have a flavor of political propaganda that was not germane to the story of Al Schmid. But Jerry kept insisting on it and finally I said, "Well, I'll take a crack at writing a





scene, and let's see how it is after I've finished it." When I finished it, Jerry said, "I like it and I want it in." And, as I recall, I was hesitant, but I just went along with him. And this is, I think, an amusing example of . . .

GARDNER: Right.

MALTZ: . . . of the opposite of what HUAC was saying. Jerry and I had a constant running battle with executives of the studio over the title. We suggested different titles, but the people in the studio in charge of exhibiting remembered only the fact that Pride of the Yankees had been a successful film, and therefore they wanted to call this Pride of the Marines. And finally they won out, and that ghastly title, I think, has been an impediment to general reaction to the film down the years. Although it was very well received at the time, exceedingly well received, I don't think that it has received the position it should have as a film of merit--just because the title is so obnoxious.

GARDNER: What would you have preferred?

MALTZ: Oh, I don't remember now any longer, but not a kind of a martial title like that, which makes it seem like the second half of a bill, you know, just dealing with bang-bang marines in the Halls of Montezuma, and so on.



GARDNER: Did you get to know the actors and so on who worked in the film? Garfield was in this one.

MALTZ: They were people I knew. Garfield, John Garfield, had had his first part in a play in Peace on Earth.

GARDNER: Right. Right.

MALTZ: And I knew Garfield from all down the years, but never intimately. He was not one of my real friends.

GARDNER: But did you associate while filming the. . . ?

MALTZ: No, I wasn't there in the filming. I just went out. . . . It was all done by Delmer Daves, the director, and I went out once to watch a scene being shot. Dane Clark was an actor I knew from New York, and we were friendly, but in a casual way. At that time it was most unusual for writers to be present when a film was being shot. The fact is that unless there was a very special reason, the studio didn't want to pay them, and the director usually didn't even want them around. . . . [tape recorder turned off]

I think I would like to mention several things about this film. It has only one battle scene in it; and just accepting the verdict of the reviewers, it was an extraordinarily intense scene and one that gave a very true feeling of battle. Now, I had never been in a war situation, and I was not capable of imagining the particular quality that that scene had which made it so very effective.





This was the fact that two men working a machine gun-- Al Schmid, with his hand on the trigger, and Diamond (I forget his first name), feeding the machine, the belt of cartridges into the gun--talked at a tremendous rate while firing. Especially Schmid. I got this from a marine officer, a Major Aronson, who had been in the battle of Guadalcanal and who was assigned to me when I was writing the screenplay. He told me that soldiers in combat are at such a pitch of excitement that frequently they do talk aloud at a great rate of speed and intensity. And that was how I wrote the scene, and that was how Daves directed it, and it came off with great effectiveness. (There was a sad note that Aronson, who had been decorated for his action in Guadalcanal, where he was a spotter, an artillery spotter in a small plane that went over the Japanese lines, committed suicide several months after he worked with me.)

Something that I need to mention is a small conversation between Jack Warner, the owner of the--or the head of the studio, and myself on the night that the film was previewed. I had a small conversational relationship with Warner. . . .



TAPE NUMBER: XIV, SIDE TWO

NOVEMBER 15, 1978

GARDNER: Your conversation with Jack Warner.

MALTZ: Yes, with Warner. Because during the time I was working on Pride of the Marines, Jerry Wald on a number of occasions had taken me to the executive dining room for lunch. Warner always presided over that table. And after the preview there was a discussion in the office of the theater, as there always was after the preview of a film, and then I went down to the men's room, where I was joined a few seconds later by Jack Warner. As we stood side by side, he commented about a scene in the film which he said he was very glad to see in it. This was a scene in a train compartment when Al Schmid and his buddy Diamond were on their way back East after their discharge from the hospital in San Diego. Diamond had had a shoulder wound from which he had recovered, and Schmid, of course, was blind, and miserable at the thought of going back to the area he had been brought up in, where he would no longer be able to see anything, and terribly anxious over the impending reunion with his girl. In an attempt to get Schmid to look at things a little differently, Diamond (whose first name was Lee, I recall, and who, by the way, was a real man who came from Boston, I believe) said to Schmid that he wasn't the only man in



the world who had problems--that his was a terrible problem, but he wasn't alone in that. For instance, he, Diamond, was worried over what kind of work he would get, that there were limitations on the kind of work he could get because of his name, the fact that he was Jewish. Warner said to me that he was so glad I had that scene in the film, and that he always had it in mind that if he had not been born in the United States, he might now be a cake of soap. Now, I've mentioned this because of the testimony that Warner gave when he was on the stand in Washington in 1947, approximately two and a half years later--no, three years later, in which he lied about this very scene.

Jerry Wald wanted me to go on immediately to another piece of material he had which became the film Mildred Pierce, which was very successful, but I again wanted to get back to work on fiction, and I left the studio. In that year my wife and I bought the house in which we'd been living and paying rent at about \$75 a month, if I recall properly. The house cost \$10,500, and it was recently priced for \$137,000, [laughter] which gives a good example of what has happened over the years. It was a three-bedroom house with a small lawn in front and a little larger lawn in back, and about ten feet from our neighbors on each side. It worked fine for us and the children, and had very little





upkeep. (I don't think I have mentioned that in 1942 we had adopted a second child, a girl.) For the rest of 1944, with the exception of a six-week interval, I worked on research for a new novel.

I had been given a classified document on the treatment of combat fatigue in North Africa by the use of the drug pentathol. This work was being done by two psychoanalysts attached to the air force, Roy Grinker and John Spiegel. The material excited me very much, and I began to plan a novel around it. The six-week exception to my steady work was six weeks of work on a film called G.I. Joe where my salary went to \$1,200 a week. The producer, Lester Cowan, was extremely uncertain about his screenplay and wanted me to write an opening frame about events before the main story. When I studied the material, I told him that the film would be long enough as it was, and I was sure he wouldn't use any frame; but he was insistent that he wanted it, and I was perfectly willing to write it. Subsequently, the frame was never used.

During this period, and from now on until I was blacklisted about three years later, I got steady offers of film work which my agent, Mary Baker, automatically turned down. She was a woman I liked very much and respected, and she was very good at her job. Other agents



would have tried by one device or another to get me to drop my fiction in order to take film jobs from which they would get a commission. But Mary Baker never did this. And I appreciated it. I might say that we had a relationship from the time I first came out to Hollywood without ever signing a contract.

The Cross and the Arrow was published in September 1944.

[tape recorder turned off] On the whole, the reviews were very, very good. In the daily New York Times. . . . What is this? Excuse me, sorry. . . . [tape recorder turned off] Orville Prescott in the daily New York Times wrote: "Maltz has achieved a new stature. The Cross and the Arrow is written with fire and fury, but the breadth of its sympathies and the scope of its vision of humanity are not confined within a narrow pattern." Whicher in the daily Herald-Tribune wrote: "Elements of a powerful psychological detective story and of a deeply spiritual probing into the degeneration of Germany under Nazi rule are combined in an example of serious fiction at its very best by Albert Maltz. Mr. Maltz has taken a theme of central importance to our time and treated it with a large-minded wisdom that can never go out of date. Few novels offer a greater reward than this." In the Sunday Tribune. . . . Hold it. Sorry. [tape recorder turned off] There were excellent reviews in the Sunday Tribune



and in the Boston Herald, the New Yorker magazine, Chicago papers, San Francisco, Harper's magazine, and so on.

There were, however, certain reviews that argued with my interpretation of events in Germany. And then there were some what I would call middling reviews, and there were several bad ones--one by Diana Trilling in the Nation and by Porter in the New Republic.

GARDNER: On what grounds, for the bad reviews?

MALTZ: Well, if I can find . . .

GARDNER: If it's trouble don't worry.

MALTZ: . . . Diana Trilling's . . . Diana Trilling never liked anything I ever wrote. And I think just on pure political grounds she found the way to put it. . . .

Oh, yes, she said, for instance: "But although The Cross and the Arrow is not without excitement, it is the kind of excitement that makes me feel used, as if I had been made to keep a death watch over someone with whom I had no vital connection. And Mr. Maltz's characters are either unconvincingly simple or unconvincingly complex."

GARDNER: Interesting. [laughter] Whatever it means.

MALTZ: The book began to sell, and its word of mouth was very good, and the publisher, as a result, began to advertise it. There were excellent quotes to use, such as the ones I quoted. Its hardback sale in the first





year was 22,000 copies, which fell just short of getting it on the best-seller list, which would have been useful. And there was a curious little wrinkle to this. At the end of February 1945 Eleanor Roosevelt wrote a column about it. At that time I happened to be in a hotel in Florida, where I was doing some research, and I know everybody in the hotel rushed out to get a copy of the book. I'm sure other people in the country who admired Eleanor Roosevelt would have wanted to buy the book, but the book was not to be found in any stores because it had been taken by a new book club called The Book Find Club as its, I think, its first choice at its beginning. The club had used the printing plates of Little, Brown and Company, and when it shipped them back, they had been shipped to an incorrect address. So there was a period of about eight weeks in which there were no copies of the novel in any bookstore in the United States. And that was just when Eleanor Roosevelt's column appeared.

GARDNER: Masterpiece of timing. [laughter]

MALTZ: Yes. There was also, in addition to the book-club sale of 36,000 copies, there was a special Sundial edition of 10,000, and then an armed forces edition of 140,000 for soldiers. The novel was not published abroad, of course, until after the war, and it has had some fifteen foreign editions, followed by paperback editions in England, Denmark, East Germany, Hungary, Holland, and China.



It has been continuously in print in some countries in the world since it was published. And it has had radio and TV dramatizations in England and a good many other countries.

GARDNER: Was there any thought of filming?

MALTZ: I'm going to come into that.

GARDNER: Oh, okay. I always anticipate you.

MALTZ: In the fall-- Well, you're with it. [laughter]

In the fall there was an offer to buy the novel to make a film by two very distinguished filmmakers: Lewis Milestone, the director, and Robert Rossen, who at that time had not yet become a director but was a very successful screenwriter. They offered, I think, \$30,000 or \$40,000 for the novel, with a percentage of the profits. And this was very exciting to me for financial reasons: a sum of money like that would have meant that I would be able to write my new novel without stopping at all to do film work, because the sale of the book itself had returned gross royalties of less than \$10,000. Now, a sale of 22,000 hardback copies nowadays would return much more because books sell for much more, but I believe the price of my novel was \$2.50 at that time. And I was constantly hoping for the day when I would be free of all film work.

Now, the agreement with Rossen and Milestone was a verbal agreement: we met in my agent's office and shook



hands, and this was the way in which business has always been transacted in Hollywood. Verbal deals are absolute and are not changed, because the actual written contracts sometimes takes months before the lawyers have them prepared, and there would be no way in which things could be bought and sold unless people could trust one another's words. So that when a month or two later Universal Pictures offered 50,000 [dollars] for the book, we turned it down. But then the contracts never came through from Rossen and Milestone, and I didn't know at that time that they had had Ingrid Bergman in mind to play the woman in the film and that she had turned down the role. And apparently they were not successful in getting the private financing they had hoped for, and, as a result, they each started to blame the other for not producing the contracts. Finally, after months of their lying, it became clear that they were welching on the deal. This was generally unheard of and I was furious. I discussed suing them with an attorney but took his advice that it would not be worth my while to go through everything that would be involved.

I think I might mention that when it was published in Germany after the war I learned that I had one error of fact in it which was a significant error. As is generally known, millions of men and women from other countries were taken forcibly into Germany (or, in some cases,





they volunteered; but usually it was forcibly) for work in factories and on farms, and this was in fact slave labor, unpaid slave labor. I had stated in my novel that in a farming area foreign workers had been put up on an auction block and had been bid for by farmers. I wrote this because in my research in religious magazines I had come across this in an article. But in fact it was an error; it never happened. What did happen was that local authorities sent out to farmers the number of workers that they needed, foreign workers that they needed on their farms, and the farmers had absolute power over those workers.

But aside from this, the book was sound, and it was very widely printed in Germany--in East Germany, this was. By a peculiar happenstance, when I signed the contract for Germany, I thought it was a publishing firm in the West, but it turned out to be one in the East; and because of the division between the two countries, once it was published in the East, the eastern publisher would not give rights to the West because they hoped to sell it to the West. This book has sold, all in all, close to 700,000 copies to date.

Now, during 1944 among some of my civic activities were the following. I was one of the speakers at a public rally to support the Roosevelt-Truman ticket, and I remember that



on election day I drove elderly people in Santa Monica and Venice to their polling places. I no longer remember how it came about, but I wrote a documentary film about New York City for the Office of War Information. It was never made and that's all I remember about it. I also attended a number of secret meetings called by a representative of the State Department, I believe, or it could have been the Office of War Information or some other official organization, to discuss the reeducation of the German people. And I guess after a while there was a decision to go another way with it, and there were no more meetings. Of course, throughout the war years I attended public meetings, contributed funds to the Red Cross and Russian War Relief, bought war bonds, and followed the events of the war with intense concern, anxiety, and sorrow.

In '45 there was a very important change in the Communist party. In late '43 there had been a meeting in Tehran of Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill, and in mid-1944 a book appeared by Earl Browder, the secretary of the Communist party, called To Tehran and Back.<sup>\*</sup> In it he presented the thesis that progressive tendencies existed within capitalism that allowed for a peaceful development in the world toward socialism. Browder "used the agreement Stalin concluded with Roosevelt and Churchill . . . as the point of departure

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<sup>\*</sup>Tehran: Our Path in War and Peace



for his thesis that the wartime collaboration would extend into the postwar world," and that this "collaboration could be and should be reinforced with class harmony on the domestic scene." I should have said that the quotation above was from Al Richmond's book, A Long View . . .

GARDNER: . . . from the Left

MALTZ: A Long View from the Left. Thank you. I, like every other member of the Communist party, read the book and discussed it. It didn't seem to me, and to quite a number I talked with, that Browder's thesis had any connection with the classic Marxist literature that had nourished us. Classic Marxist analysis rested upon the thesis that there was an inevitable class struggle in capitalism between the owners of the means of production and the workers whose labor power they exploited. Moreover, classical Marxism believed that capitalism was an outmoded economic system and carried within it the seeds of its own destruction, that it was the opposite of a progressive system. We also had believed that German fascism was precisely the manifestation of a dying capitalism seeking to perpetuate its rule. Now, this difference between the substance of Browder's book and what we had hitherto believed was no mere theoretical matter to be left in the realm of theory: very important practical decisions flowed from it.

We in the rank and file of the party did not know the struggle that was going on in the national leadership





in which William Z. Foster, who had been the secretary of the party until he had had a very serious heart attack some years before, was leading the fight against Browder. Browder won out, and Foster remained silent so that he would not be expelled for factionalism and because he felt that the party would get back on the track sooner or later. The practical result was a decision in May 1944--no, it couldn't have been May . . .

GARDNER: Forty-five.

MALTZ: . . . May '45, yes . . . to disband the Communist party and substitute for it a Communist Political Association which would be a kind of a loyal opposition to the American capitalist establishment. The perspective for the future would be Communist Political Association clubs or branches like those, let's say, of the Democratic party. And the concept that capitalism was a dying system that. . . . No, let's pause for a moment, I want to rephrase that. [tape recorder turned off] And the concept that there was an inevitable class struggle in American society, as in any capitalist society, would have to be eliminated. Now, I've been giving this very briefly because there's no reason to spend a lot of time on it. What is important is that I, like a lot of others, had great respect for Browder, and so I just said to myself, well, I don't really see this; I don't agree with it but I'll go along with it. So I



joined the Communist Political Association. Interestingly enough, I remember the house in which I signed up. It was the house of Nicholas Bela, who was one of the few foreign-born members of the Hollywood Communist party and who later became an informer. Oh, no--I said '45 and I'm wrong, when I gave the date of the changeover from the Communist Political Association. It was . . .

GARDNER: It was '44?

MALTZ: . . . '44, yes. It was '44. In January 1945 I decided that I wanted to see the work being done by Grinker and Spiegel, who were now at an air force hospital on the west coast of Florida, north of St. Petersburg. Warner Brothers helped me get to the Pentagon, where I saw the head of the armed--of the, I guess, air force medical service, a General Grant who was a descendant of Ulysses Grant, and arrangements were made for me to go to this hospital. It was adjacent to a small hotel, and I was there in February and March, and I got the material that I wanted. I not only talked with the physicians I've mentioned and others but I was permitted to sit in behind a screen and listen to and observe a number of different pentathol treatments, which were enormously dramatic.

Pentathol, of course, is a drug that is used in surgery nowadays, and it puts patients out of consciousness altogether. But when used in smaller doses it has a kind of hypnotic



effect, and the psychiatrists there were using it in order to have patients relive--with the, as it were, the calming and soothing and interpretative help of a doctor--those events in battle, in combat, that had resulted in their getting what was then called combat fatigue. Men who had become too nervous to fly anymore, men who had various psychosomatic difficulties such as the inability to eat, loss of hearing, loss of vision, and who had been completely healthy or, let's say, had been functioning in a healthy manner before certain traumatic events, were greatly helped by this treatment. And I listened to men recount fearful experiences, and cry and scream while under pentathol, and then, after they emerged from its effect, the psychiatrist was there to discuss it with them and to help them adjust to what had happened, to accept it and to relieve them of their emotional problems.

Now, before I went down to the air force hospital, I had had an interview with a film producer, Frank Ross. He had purchased a best-selling novel, The Robe, and he had three or four screenplays written on it and had not been satisfied with any of them, and he asked me to go to work on it. I told him that I was going off to do the research and would not interrupt it for film work, and I knew that at this time there were almost daily film offers coming in for me. But while I was away in Florida, the sale of





The Cross and the Arrow to Rossen and Milestone. . . . The fact that the sale was not going to go through became clear, and at the same time, close to the end of my stay I got a telegram from Ross offering me 1,000 [dollars] a week to work on The Robe. When I went back, I got in touch with him and read the novel and decided that there was material in it that I could use to make a screenplay that would be interesting. I talked about what I would do with it with Ross, and I saw in it, let's say, the profound social phenomenon that was Jesus and the effect that he had on that world, and Ross accepted my stipulation that I wouldn't write any scene that supported religious mysticism; that is, I would give a psychological interpretation of the effect of the robe on characters, but I would not endow the robe of Jesus with mystical properties. And I also wanted to set Jesus in his proper historical frame as one of a long line of Galilean preachers who had come out of Galilee trying to reform the spiritual life of the Jewish people. Ross accepted these provisos and we worked extremely well together. He was a man of taste and intelligence and an extremely nice human being. It was a very big project. It required a good deal of research, and I worked eight months on it until my screenplay was finished.

In August of '45 Pride of the Marines opened. The reviews were magnificent, and it was again named by the



New York Times as one of the ten best of the year. And I was nominated for an Academy award for the screenplay, but didn't get it. The writers of Lost Weekend did.

I was on a special project for just a week or so in that year and that was The House I Live In, which came about in a curious way. Soon after I went to work on The Robe, I was invited with Frank Ross to the home of a man who at that time was going to direct it, Mervyn Le Roy, and Frank Sinatra was there for supper. During the evening, Sinatra began to talk about the work that he had been doing, from the time he was still unknown, about racial prejudice. He has always been deeply concerned about race prejudice, and he used to go around to high schools talking to children about it. And he. . . . I forget now whether it was he or Frank Ross who made the suggestion that it would be awfully good if we could do something about it on film. The next morning Frank Ross came to me, and he had an idea for a short film, in which Sinatra could perform, which would say something about racial prejudice. I thought it was a good idea and sat down on it and developed a story that would take about one reel and would involve Sinatra's scene. And because of my friendship with Earl Robinson, I knew the song for which Earl had written the music which was called "The House I Live In."

GARDNER: I don't think you previously mentioned that friendship with Earl Robinson.



MALTZ: Well, I haven't mentioned my friendship with a lot of people I know.

GARDNER: Well, as long as Earl Robinson is brought in now, it might be interesting for you to mention how you got to know him . . .

MALTZ: Well, I. . . .

GARDNER: . . . and something about him, since he's not very well known.

MALTZ: Oh, I see. He isn't [well known] now; he was at one time.

GARDNER: Exactly.

MALTZ: Yes, perhaps Earl is a good example of what can happen with people's reputations. Earl was a man from the Seattle area who had a real gift for, I would say, lovely ballad music and first came to my attention in New York in the late thirties as the composer of "Ballad for Americans," the words of which had been written by a man called John LaTouche who also did some Broadway musicals. It was sung by Paul Robeson in its first performance and was an enormous success--so much so that within the same year, I think, the Republicans asked for it to be sung at their presidential convention. And it was played again and again on radio. Subsequently, Robinson wrote the music to words written by Millard Lampell for "The Lonesome Train" which was enormously successful and I think very beautiful.





Both the Ballad for Americans and "The Lonesome Train" are pieces that I myself enjoy playing at least once a year, and have all down the years. And Earl did other such works. He was a very well-known man, and I met him, I think, only when he came out to Hollywood looking for some film work for the same reason I had come out, and we became warm friends. I knew about his song "The House I Live In," for which words had been written by. . . . [tape recorder turned off]

The words to "The House I Live In" were written by a man whose pen name I forget for the moment [Lewis Allan]. His real name was [Abel] Meeropol. He also wrote the words to the song "Strange Fruit," which Billie Holiday made so famous. And it was he and his wife who, in the early fifties, adopted the two orphaned sons of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

The song fitted the concept of the one-act film beautifully, and it made an excellent title for it, and this was acceptable to Ross, and to Sinatra, and to Mervyn Le Roy. All of us did what we did without remuneration, of course, and RKO got hold of film for it (since film had to come through government allocation), and it subsequently played for years and years in schools all over the country. It was initially released to 20,000 schools, and it was played on the Paramount, Warner, and RKO chains, and it got a special Academy award.



GARDNER: What exactly was your role in that?

MALTZ: I wrote it.

GARDNER: You wrote it. You wrote the whole thing . . .  
in a week?

MALTZ: Oh, less than a week. It was just a short thing.  
I don't think it was any longer.



TAPE NUMBER: XV, SIDE ONE

NOVEMBER 15, 1978

GARDNER: Return to 1945.

MALTZ: Yes, I ought to mention that this was the beginning of a cordial relationship between Sinatra and myself in which we would see each other on a social basis. And there would be phone calls on one matter or another. I mention it because of what happened in 1960 with a film project that he wanted me to do when I was still on the blacklist.

Somewhere in this period, in 1945, I had a discussion with a Major Winston and with the former head of the German film company UFA, a refugee whose name I cannot recall. Winston was somehow associated with this man in civilian life and they wanted to do The Cross and the Arrow as the first film in a reconstituted Germany. And this, of course, was very exciting to me.

My records turn up some examples of my civic activities in 1945. I made a speech at a Negro church on the role of the Negro troops in the Civil War. My doing this was probably the result of a friendship I had with a Mrs. Charlotta Bass, publisher of a black newspaper, the [California] Eagle. I no longer recall how I got to be friends with her, but I know that I saw her rather a number of times and met her





nephew, whom she wanted to succeed her as editor of the paper and who, sadly, was killed in the war. I also spent a lot of time working with a young woman, Beatrice Griffith, on a book that was subsequently published called American Me. She was working with Chicanos at that time and had an extraordinary command of their way of talking English and of their psychology. And this was one of the writers I worked with who did get a book published.

I remember in passing, worth relating I think, a very amusing evening at the Russian consulate to which I was invited, and the other guests there, besides my wife and myself, were Theodore Dreiser and his wife, and Charles Chaplin and his rather new bride Oona. In the course of the evening, Dreiser got very drunk and Chaplin began to tell a story--tell about a project that excited me enormously. He wanted to do a film, he said, about the Haymarket martyrs (I won't go into who they were for this), and he spoke with great passion and eloquence about the beauty of the moment when one of them, [Louis] Lingg, committed suicide by putting a percussion cap between his teeth and biting it. And as Chaplin told this story, Dreiser kept saying, "That's it kid, go ahead kid, I'm with you kid." [laughter] And in subsequent days, when I happened to tell certain friends about this, among them were some who knew Chaplin rather well, and they told me that



he had been talking about this project for years and that he was never going to do it. [laughter]

My records also turn up that I was part of a Screen Writers Guild public discussion in a theater in Westwood about the new film Tomorrow the World; that I attended a dinner of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee at which Paul Robeson and General Evans Carlson spoke; and that, because of my novel, I was asked to lecture on the German question, and I did so for discussion groups or in public lectures on April 29, May 12, 20, 23, June 10, July 7 (and at that point I had a note that I was plagued by requests to speak). Oh, yes, I see that on May 17 I had dinner at Warner Brothers Studio with Jerry Wald and Jack Warner and Delmer Daves, and then we went to Huntington Park for the preview of Pride of the Marines that I've already mentioned. There were, of course, always [Screen] Writers Guild meetings which I attended. And there were meetings with the Hollywood Writers Mobilization and one with the Lawyers Guild on war criminals. I have a note that I spent all one afternoon reading Richard Wright's Black Boy, and made the notation that, to me, it was one of the great personal documents in all literature, and I despised the left-wing criticisms of it. That has relevance because of the thing I'm going to come to about the "Maltz controversy." And during this period, Warner Brothers



offered me a contract of six months on and six months off each year, and I rejected it because I didn't want to be on contract to anyone.

GARDNER: How much would it have paid?

MALTZ: I don't remember what they would have paid, but I have. . . .

GARDNER: If they would have wanted to keep that updated . . .

MALTZ: Yes, I will have that updated in a moment.

GARDNER: Okay.

MALTZ: On October 17 I was down to a meeting of the board of education with others to protest their allowing Gerald K. Smith to speak in a school auditorium. And my position has changed now: I would let the bastard speak. [laughter]

GARDNER: Well, wasn't that the incident in which Al Wirin fought in the courts to allow him to speak, and then he and Lauren Miller picketed outside?

MALTZ: It may well have been. It may well have been, yes. I see that I made a speech in the Embassy Auditorium downtown which was sponsored by the Jewish People's Fraternal Order on the opening of a million-dollar rehabilitation drive for Jews in all lands.

By the middle of November, when I had finished my work on The Robe, I went to work on the novel for which I had done research at the air force hospital. My overall story was that of a factory worker who had gone into service and





had broken down in combat. He would be treated in a hospital, would recover, and then, going home, would become a union organizer. I wanted to follow his career. And as I worked on it I knew that I wanted to do some factory work as part of my research because I had never done any in my life. On December 15 I had a note in a diary that I was keeping at the time that I refused an offer of \$75,000 from Milton Sperling to work on a film having to do with the OSS [Office of Strategic Services]. But I did tell him, because he was so insistent, that I wouldn't take any other film job without letting him have a chance to bid for me. Now, since I had started four and a half years back with a salary that would be the equivalent of \$7,500 for a complete film, this was an enormous leap in the pay I could command.

I worked through the fall on the novel, and then in January Frank Capra, whom I had not known, asked to see me and I did meet with him. He wanted me to work on some material which I read, and I didn't want to; I wanted to keep working on my novel, and I had enough money to carry me for perhaps four, five, six months, I don't recall anymore. But he was very insistent, and I finally came to a decision that I would ask a salary so high that he would certainly reject it. But if he took it, it would be worth my while to interrupt the novel to do it. But there



was the promise I had made to Sperling, and so my agent told Frank Capra what the situation was and said that Sperling would have to have the first right. But she asked him for \$5,000 a week for me, and he said, "You've got it," and then she said the same thing to Sperling, and he said "You've got it." [laughter] And so I did go to work with Sperling on this OSS material. Fritz Lang was the director and Gary Cooper was the leading actor, and, very regrettably, they had a production date on it, which is a terrible way in which to begin to work on a screenplay.

GARDNER: He was already cast? Gary Cooper was already cast at the time. . . ?

MALTZ: He was already cast. He was already cast, yes. And Ring Lardner was already at work on the script. And I worked for some time separately from Ring. I had been led to believe that both Sperling and Lang wanted to make an important film out of this material, which was just material. But after a few weeks I realized that what they wanted to make was a melodrama with a patina of importance, and I told Milton--I felt very frustrated with the material as I worked at it, and I told Milton that I wanted to quit.

GARDNER: Before you continue, let me just ask you: what was the project that Capra had in mind for you?

MALTZ: I forget what it was. I forget what Capra had. . . .

GARDNER: I just wondered if it was something with people. . . .



MALTZ: I think it was a fantasy film, I'm not sure. But I'm not sure. And Milton Sperling, whom I liked as a person, asked me please not to leave, not to leave them without a script when the shooting date was so near. And I stayed on it, although I regretted afterwards that I had. When finally a script came together, putting together the work of Ring and myself, I felt that it was a very mediocre script, and indeed the film turned out that way. It's time now. I come now to what has become known as the "Maltz controversy."

GARDNER: Before you get into the controversy, let me just make one or two comments about Cloak and Dagger.

MALTZ: Oh, yes.

GARDNER: As I mentioned to you last week, it was the one script that I was able to find at UCLA. And I also found several commentaries on it and various books of criticism. The major criticism seems to be that it had the potential to be an outstanding spy thriller, one of the best, but the love theme sort of ended up pushing that aside. What is your comment? Do you have any comment on that?

MALTZ: Well, you know, I really can't comment on that because I don't remember the film well enough. I have not seen it in these years of viewing old films on TV. I've not seen it. I don't remember the script; I haven't reread it so that I can't comment.





GARDNER: Okay, I just wondered. You've really pushed that one aside, haven't you?

MALTZ: Yes, it's certainly not something I wanted to look at again.

GARDNER: Okay, okay. Then the "Maltz controversy. . . ."

MALTZ: In late October '45 an article appeared in the New Masses that commanded my attention. It was written by one of the editors, Isidor Schneider, and was entitled "Probing Writers' Problems." It invited discussion and I immediately wanted to respond to it. For a long time I had had growing opposition to what I considered the narrow, vulgar manner in which the Communist party slogan Art Is A Weapon was interpreted. I also carried a burden of resentment at some of the ridiculous criticism I had read in the New Masses and the Daily Worker--literary criticism, I mean. So in spare time I wrote an article that the magazine subsequently entitled "What Shall We Ask of Writers?" and it was published in the New Masses on February 12, 1946. It so happened that the article appeared at a time when the Communist party was in a state of ferment, a state that was close to frenzy, actually, and I have to go back a year to explain this.

Around May 1945 the Daily Worker printed an article written in the form of a letter from a leading French Communist, Jacques Duclos. In it he sharply and fundamentally



condemned the Browder theories that had led to the dissolution of the Communist party and the creation of the Communist Political--C.P.I.? What? Communist Political . . . I thought it was Communist Political Association. . . .

GARDNER: So did I.

MALTZ: Well, maybe it's a . . .

GARDNER: International?

MALTZ: No, not international. Must be C.P.A. It was obvious that Duclos was not speaking as an individual. He was voicing not only the opinion of the French Communist party, which had come through the war with enormous prestige and growth, but the opinion of Moscow as well. Open discussion started at once in the Daily Worker with Foster attacking Browder's revisionism, as did others. Some months later, the national leadership dropped Browder from all posts and called for the dissolution of the Communist Political Association and the reconstitution of the Communist party. This decision, however, didn't end the turmoil in the party. A drive started to cleanse party thinking of all manifestations of Browderism. Finally Browder himself was expelled from the party at a meeting of the national leadership in February 1946. This meeting happened to coincide with the publication of my article. And one of the top leaders, Robert Thompson (who, incidentally, was a decorated hero of World War II),



jumped with both feet on my little contribution to a literary discussion, denouncing it as, quote, a "smear Trotskyite article," closed quote. Since anything that smacked of the doctrines of Leon Trotsky was anathema to all members of the Stalinist Communist party, this raised my article to a political level far different from the one on which I thought I was writing. Instead of my being a participant in a discussion limited to the pages of a magazine and to writers, critics, and readers, I had become, for the entire Communist party, an example of a cultural Typhoid Mary. [laughter] I was the advocate of Trotskyite aberrations, Browderite revisionism, anti-working-class and antiparty doctrines that had to be exposed and refuted. A series of six articles immediately appeared in the Daily Worker by Sam Sillen analyzing my article point by point and arguing that it was un-Marxist, unsound, liberal, bourgeois thinking. Sillen was a former instructor in English at New York University who had become a full-time critic and editor in the communist movement. We had been near-neighbors and cordial friends in my last several years in New York. He was one of those who had been creatively helpful in discussing with me the first version of The Cross and the Arrow in 1942. There was nothing personal in Sillen's attack: it was a sincere, sharp discussion of Marxist theory. Very different were



two articles by Michael Gold. He announced that I had succumbed to Hollywood corruption and was now deserting the cause of the working class, and so on. I wrote him a furious letter, which he proceeded to use against me in the same slanderous manner. Late in the month Howard Fast attacked my article in the New Masses.

Now, it is not my purpose in this history to go into the ideological discussions that went on. What I do want to set down here is what I felt about the hammer blows I was receiving and why I wrote the second article as I did. I had never considered myself to be a theoretical sage. Far from it. Therefore I didn't feel that in my first article I had laid down the ten commandments which I now had to defend as I would my honor. My self-respect was involved with something quite different: with a desire to think my way through all of the arguments to a position of clarity if I could achieve that. And this desire was strengthened by several factors: first, by my study of philosophy at college and the training it gave me in trying to be rigorous about my own thinking; second, by the very strong insistence in Marxist literature, and in the practice of the Communist parties, of the need to listen to criticism sincerely and to accept it if it is merited. It was an ideal that I respected deeply. In addition, by this time in my life, if not always before, it was not a devastating





blow to my ego to acknowledge that I had made a mistake.

For these reasons, as I read and listened to arguments against my article that went on for a month, and included party meetings also, I came to feel that I had made various assertions that weren't sound within the orbit of Marxist philosophy. In the final analysis, however, despite my intentions, it was not primarily with my intellect that I wrote my second article. It was largely written by my emotions. Once my article was made into a major political issue of the entire Communist party, I was automatically faced with the choice of being expelled from the party or of accepting the criticisms and repudiating those fundamental positions in my article that were under attack. I didn't perceive then what I realized subsequently: that I was as incapable of calm, analytic thought as a shell-shocked soldier under artillery bombardment in the front line. Above everything else, it was a matter of my conscience and self-respect not to leave the party. Since it was so, it inevitably dominated and shaped everything I tried to formulate intellectually.

The second article I wrote came about because the New Masses offered me space to continue the discussion. Undoubtedly the party leadership had been consulted beforehand. It already knew from reports from the L.A. leaders that I was not taking an intransigent position. To the



contrary, at a meeting toward the end of February, which was chaired by Sam Sillen who had been sent out by New York to join in the discussions out here, I listened to some very abrasive remarks by various party members.

GARDNER: Do you care to name them?

MALTZ: No, I wouldn't go into names. Without accepting their strictures at that time, I nevertheless made clear that my article had not been the result of any attempt on my part to consciously attack fundamental party doctrine. Until the middle of March all of my working hours were necessarily devoted to intensive labor on Cloak and Dagger. After that I started to write the second article, with Sam Sillen at my elbow. In the state I was in, it was impossible for me to write with a calm and analytical mind. Since my overwhelming emotional need was to remain in the party, I repudiated many things in my first article.

Hostile critics broke out in a chorus of agreement that I had recanted like cultural figures in the Soviet Union when they were called to account for having strayed from the Stalinist line. This comparison has come down the years, but it was, and is, superficial and inaccurate. The Soviet citizens who recanted had done so out of fear. The easiest thing in the world was to leave the American Communist party. It had no power to harm me or anyone. Indeed, hundreds and thousands of Americans joined it and



left it between 1920 and 1950. Actually, if I had chosen to leave the Communist party and to defend every comma of my first article, those same critics, with the same superficiality, would have called me a brave fellow and an honest soul, and the editors of Life magazine, Reader's Digest, and Saturday Evening Post would have come running to me with checkbook in hand. However ineptly or embarrassingly expressed, my second article was one of conscience and fundamental loyalty to an ideal. I wanted to remain linked to the movement that represented, in my eyes at that time, the hope of mankind for a decent future. My integrity depended upon that and not on the rightness of my first article as a whole or in any part. Unfortunately, I was not at that time able to state any of this. To have acknowledged party membership would have meant the end of my ability to work in films.

GARDNER: Really! At that point?

MALTZ: Oh, at that point without any question. There was no open Communist writing in films. There was not one studio who would have had a Communist one hour . . .

GARDNER: Really!

MALTZ: . . . if he had acknowledged this; he would have been off instantly and automatically blacklisted. Nor could I acknowledge it a year and a half later when the blacklist came because then political conditions made it impossible.





Now, this controversy was written about in Newsweek, Time, the New Republic, the Saturday Review of Literature, the New Leader, and other magazines, and has been mentioned in not a few books since, with the same false identification between my act and that of a Soviet writer in the Stalin period. It has been written about not only superficially but also absurdly. For instance, Garry Wills referred to it in his introduction to Lillian Hellman's Scoundrel Time, published in 1976. He wrote: "Maltz was called to account for his deviations--typically, at a cell meeting in a Hollywood nightclub." It is truly astonishing to find that a serious social analyst and political thinker has swallowed the prevailing myths about Hollywood so completely that he has even invented one of his own. [laughter] He might be forgiven if he had only borrowed someone else's nonsense. But in the thirty years between 1946 and 1976 I never read in the testimony of any informer a reference to a Communist party meeting in a nightclub, and I never saw any reference to it in a magazine or newspaper or even by an imaginative Hearst columnist. It remained for Mr. Wills to invent it. I have wondered why he didn't add that I listened to my critics with one hand holding a glass of champagne and the other on a starlet's thigh. [laughter] Now, I have a bibliography that I thought I might put on this.



GARDNER: Fine. Sure, that would be good.

MALTZ: Of the printed materials of the controversy, there was first the article by Isidor Schneider in the New Masses, "Probing Writers' Problems." This was on October 23, the issue of October 23, '45; my article in the issue of February 12, '46, "What Shall We Ask of Writers?"; in the same issue another article by Schneider, "Background to Error"; and then in the Daily Worker, six articles appearing February 11 through 16, 1946, called "Which Way Left-Wing Literature?" I said Sam Sillen, didn't I? Yes. In the Daily Worker, Michael Gold, columns on February 12, '46, February 23, and March 2, March 16; Howard Fast in the New Masses, February 26, '46; Joseph North--now, I don't know whether North is the New Masses or the Daily Worker.

GARDNER: The New Masses. It was the same issue as the Fast.

MALTZ: Ah, February 26, '46. A.B. Magil in the Daily Worker, March 1, '46. Alvah Bessie in the New Masses, March 12, 1946; Sonora Babb in the New Masses on March 12, '46; John Howard Lawson in the New Masses in March 19, '46, with an article entitled "Art Is a Weapon"; and then I, again, with an article "Moving Forward," in April 9, 1946; Sam Sillen in the Daily Worker, on April 14, 1946, "Better Politics and Better Art"; and on the twenty-first, in the Daily Worker, by Sillen, "The Basis of Social Realism"; James T. Farrell in the New Republic, on May 6, '46, and May 13;



the Saturday Review, in July 16, '49, . . . I know that it's discussed in a book by a man, David Shannon, I believe The Decline of American Communism, and discussed in Daniel Aaron's Writers on the Left. Murray Kempton in Part of Our Time discusses it in a chapter called "The Day of the Locust." It is discussed in The Inquisition in Hollywood by Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, and in other places. Now, do you have any questions about this?

GARDNER: Yes, I certainly do. [laughter] Well, since I read through the material yesterday, there were a number of questions. I think the first question I should offer is what your thoughts are now on the material as literary criticisms.

MALTZ: I can't tell you. And I can't tell you for a number of reasons: the first is that I actually haven't sat down to try and say, well, now, who was right and wrong on what pieces and so on; and secondly, I am not, as it were, steeped in Marxist thinking, or in an effort to do Marxist thinking, in the way I was in those years. In those years I believed in the soundness of Marxism, and I wanted very much to try and think in a dialectical manner, and I read Marxist materials. I haven't really read Marxist materials now since . . . well, it's twenty years. And not only that, but while I retain a belief in the classic ideals of Marxism--namely, human brotherhood,



a lack of exploitation of man by man--I no longer believe that the body of Marxist literature is the sound thinking that I once thought it was. For instance, I now laugh at the phrase "scientific socialism" because in a world in which the Soviet Union opposes China, the Soviet Union versus Yugoslavia . . . China opposing Vietnam, etcetera, ad infinitum, and all of them claiming to be scientific Marxists, it demonstrates the absurdity of the phrase. And so I'm not prepared to assess this.

GARDNER: Okay. Well, one of the phrases I wrote down from your first article was the one that was picked up, of course, by Lawson later--where you say, "Art is a weapon only when it is art." Do you still agree with that?

MALTZ: Oh, I would agree with that, yes. Although--yes, sure, sure I would agree with that. . . .

GARDNER: Because it seems awfully simple on its surface. It seemed to me also (and you touched on this briefly) that part of the reason for the controversy was the moment, the time, but also the fact that what aggravated it was that two of the writers that you picked were at that moment anathema to the party, namely, Farrell and Wright.

MALTZ: Yes. Well, see I was-- One thing I could have done in the second article, which I didn't do and I regret this, I could have said (in the second article), now look, whatever we say about Farrell and so on,





Studs Lonigan was praised by the Daily Worker and the New Masses when it appeared. The book has not been revised. If it was good then, why isn't it good now? I liked it then, I like it now. And the same about Wright. But I was so punchy, really, that even that I let go. You know, I kept fumbling the ball, as it were.

GARDNER: Yes. Howard Fast called you a liquidationist. What does that mean?

MALTZ: Well, as that term was used, it means that you, let's say, dissolve away the Marxism, or you dissolve away a Communist position or a Marxist position or a class-struggle position--that's what he meant.

GARDNER: I see. Since he later on recanted, rather vocally, his entire Marxist position, in the book The Naked God. . . .

MALTZ: Well, that was. . . . See, he didn't . . . he, let's say, didn't recant, as the term is used; he changed his political position.

GARDNER: No, perhaps not. He changed his political position.

MALTZ: In a book that's full of lies, by the way.

GARDNER: There's a certain sense of irony in his criticisms.

MALTZ: Yes, well, of course. I mean, that book-- I don't know if I'll mention it, I might mention it because of my contact with Howard in prison . . . I really ought to



put it down to mention it, but that was such a dishonest book. In fact I think I want to remember to discuss that book, The Naked God, and also a book written by Ruth McKenney called, I think, Love Story.

GARDNER: Okay. I'll keep those in mind as well.

MALTZ: All right, yes.

GARDNER: North's article on you, as was Alvah Bessie's, as I recall, was not quite as meaty as Fast; I think Fast was perhaps, of the ones I read in New Masses--there was one comment in there that I found very interesting because at the time it seemed probably true and the last thirty years have changed that perspective, which was that over the previous fifty years, from the turn of the century, all important American writing had been left-wing in character, from Jack London to John Steinbeck. Now, you could have gotten away with a statement like that in 1946, and you certainly can't now.

MALTZ: Who said that?

GARDNER: I think it was Fast. But it may have been Bessie.

MALTZ: Well, I wonder whether that was true even in 1946 about all important American writing. For instance, immediately, Thomas Wolfe--I consider him a very important American writer. And he wasn't left-wing.

GARDNER: Right.

MALTZ: There was the school of social criticism, let's



say, that we found in Dreiser, Frank Norris, and one other man whose name I forget. But. . . . Did he mention only fiction or literature?

GARDNER: Well, I think his implication was-- Of course, you had divided journalism and art . . .

MALTZ: Yes.

GARDNER: . . . and so the point of the article, the rebuttal article, was anyway to say that journalism can equal art . . .

MALTZ: Sure it can. I know that.

GARDNER: . . . anyway. Yes, right.

MALTZ: Of course you go into playwriting, O'Neill had some anarchist ideas, but it doesn't mean that he was a left-wing playwright. I wouldn't consider him so. And, gee, you know, when you start to think of novelists, all of a sudden you forget . . . you forget who were the novelists and so on.

GARDNER: Well, of course, even in 1946 I suppose that's-- Well, Faulkner had been writing for twenty years . . .

MALTZ: Faulkner, of course Faulkner.

GARDNER: . . . Fitzgerald, who had. . . . Hemingway . . .

MALTZ: I wouldn't consider Hemingway a left-wing . . .

GARDNER: . . . of course Hemingway had just come off the Spanish civil war and World War II.

MALTZ: Yes, but his book was attacked by the Communist party.





GARDNER: Oh, was it?

MALTZ: Very seriously, because in it he gave a picture, which proved historically later to be absolutely true, of an absolutely crazy Communist leader who was shooting people. And that was André Marty, the French commissar in Spain, who was a nut and shot a lot of innocent people, had a lot of innocent people shot. And Hemingway saw what was happening, reproduced it, and the party attacked him.

GARDNER: So even then it didn't hold up, and that's one of the things that seemed most interesting to me is that. . . .

MALTZ: Sinclair Lewis.

GARDNER: Sinclair Lewis, right.

MALTZ: I mean if we start to go down the line of writers . . . you don't think of them offhand . . . no, that's not true . . . what Fast said.

GARDNER: But your first article really did seem to be an interesting kickoff for literary discussion.

MALTZ: Yes, for discussion, but . . . it changed.

GARDNER: What about repercussions on that afterwards? You mentioned some of them, and you mention that the thing still pops up with Garry Wills and so forth and so on.

MALTZ: Yes, it's going to go on forever. And, I mean, I have never before given an explanation fully in this way.



I did in several previous interviews. Books not yet published go into it more than I have previously, but not as fully as this. So this is the only place, really, in which my whole . . . just what happened is laid down. And, repercussions . . . well, something I've lived with. That's all. I regret it happened, but it happened, and this is why it happened.

GARDNER: Well, I think that covers my questions. Shall we adjourn for the day?

MALTZ: Yes, I think we might.



TAPE NUMBER: XV, SIDE TWO

NOVEMBER 21, 1978

GARDNER: Now, you mentioned just now that there were some additions you'd like to make.

MALTZ: Yes. I happen to recall that I had a binder of letters that I received on various books, and I've selected several of the letters that came in on The Cross and the Arrow because they attest to the authenticity of the book.

Lion Feuchtwanger wrote: "I'm sure that it is a literary and political achievement which will last always."

Erwin Piscator, who was one of the leading theatrical directors of pre-Hitler Germany and who was working in New York at the New School for Social Research, asked for the dramatic rights to the book so that he could stage it when the German theater began again. And he said, I quote, "I think it is a great and effective work."

There was a letter from a man who signed himself André Simone, whom I had met in New York before I moved to California, who said: "I consider it the best novel written on Hitler Germany. The most astounding thing to me is that an American writer was able to penetrate more profoundly into the little secrets of a German isolated behind an iron wall, was able to comprehend the psychology of the little man in Nazi Germany better than any exiled German writer who tried it." Now, I want to mention about Simone that he



had been very active in the antifascist movement in the years before the war. He was based in Paris and he was the chief editor of a book called, I think, The Black Book of Nazi Germany.\* I'm not absolutely sure about title but it was . . .

GARDNER: That can be checked.

MALTZ: Yes . . . it was a very important compilation that came out in around 1936 or '37, I believe. He also came to the United States on several fund-raising drives for antifascist work, and I have been told that he was, in part, the model for the main character in Lillian Hellman's Watch on the Rhine. I can't be absolutely sure of this. I just have heard this; I don't know that it's certainty. Now the more important thing about--or not the more important, but another aspect to André Simone was the fact that he was born in Czechoslovakia, although he apparently lived in Germany, lived and worked in Germany, and that his real name was Otto Katz. He went back to Czechoslovakia directly after the war and became editor of the leading Communist newspaper. In 1952, I believe it was, he was one of those arrested in the Slansky trial. He was tortured and he confessed to a lot of nonsense, such as saying that he was a Zionist spy and a British agent as well, and he was executed.

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\*The Black Book--Jewish Black Book Committee





There was a letter from two Germans, two German translators--I received letters (I'm sorry) from two German translators living in the American zone after the war was over who asked to translate the book. And I also got a letter from a German war veteran in the American zone who had been a prisoner of war in the United States, and he asked if he could translate the book. And there was a letter written in June '45 by an American lieutenant with the occupation forces saying that he was stationed in an area where everything fit the description in my novel: the camouflaged factory, Polish and Russian slave laborers on the farms, and so on. And that's all I wanted to put in. [tape recorder turned off]

Now I want to continue with the history of the year 1946. On March 5 of that year a momentous event occurred: Winston Churchill, no longer in office, made a speech at Westminster College, Missouri. The college was in Truman's home state, and Truman was in attendance at the speech, and it was clear from other evidence that Churchill had had prior consultation with Truman. The essence of his speech was a portrait of the Soviet Union as a nation out to conquer the world, and that there had to be a world crusade to contain and smash world communism in the name of Anglo-Saxon democracy. That



Churchill should make such a speech was quite consistent with his prior record because he had been in charge of the British invasion forces in the Soviet Union in 1918, '19 and '20. And throughout the twenties he had preached the menace of the Red Revolution. There was a temporary alliance with the Soviet Union in World War II when Britain's life was at stake, but now he had returned to the same tack again. [tape recorder turned off] I'm now quoting from a small portion of his speech that's reproduced in volume one, page 349, of Fleming's The Cold War and Its Origins. Churchill said, "Beware, I say: Time may be short. Do not let us take the course of letting events drift along until it is too late." He then went on to say that nobody knew "what Soviet Russia and its Communist international organization intends to do in the future, or what are the limits if any to their expansive and proselytizing tendencies." He then went on to say that "from Stettin to Trieste there was an iron curtain." And this was the creation of the phrase "iron curtain."

This speech was the opening salvo in the cold war that followed. Debate immediately started in the United States press, and the tone toward the Soviet Union, which was our very recent ally in war, and toward American Communists, began to change in the press. Now, in saying that this



was the start of the cold war I don't mean to imply any conclusions about the merits of the disputes between the United States and the Soviet Union. I'm merely recognizing that there was the pronouncement of a political stance in a way that had not occurred before, and one of such a nature that historians have dated the beginning of the cold war from that speech.

In the middle of--now coming back to myself-- in the middle of April 1946 I was able to start research work on the novel I was hoping to write, for which I had a title, working title, Johnny Dragoo, and, as I mentioned earlier, I believe, I wanted to do some factory work because of who the central character was.

GARDNER: What did that name mean, Johnny Dragoo?

MALTZ: Just the name of a guy, name of a man. I did about seven weeks of factory work, which was enough to get me what I needed. Jobs were easy to get at that time because a considerable number of men had not yet been demobilized from the army. My first job was too heavy for me physically although I was in good shape for someone who was essentially a sedentary worker. I could not handle with any comfort an all-day job which consisted primarily of lifting fifty-gallon oil drums which weighed about sixty pounds. I started in the morning with some other men lifting and rolling them so that we loaded an





entire boxcar of a train, a freight boxcar, and by about 11:30 in the morning, when we had finished, I was out on my feet and knew that I had to seek other work. I don't know how I lasted the day.

I was about three weeks in a factory where my small shop was making egg beaters, and I was putting two parts together to the ruination of a hand. I had another job soldering parts of a plumbing fixture, and the boss of the shop did an unaccountable thing. Although he knew that it was important to protect the hands of the man doing the soldering from the acid that was involved or else the acid would eat the flesh, he gave me a pair of gloves, a pair of rubber gloves that had rents in them. So, as a result, within a few days I had an open wound on one hand and had to quit. This is an incredible. . . .

GARDNER: What were the factories?

MALTZ: The names of them?

GARDNER: Yes. Who were you working for?

MALTZ: Well, the first factory, with the oil drums, was something called the Levine Cooperage. And there they took old oil drums and they cleaned them out. And if they were dented, they blew them out and they renovated them and painted them and then resold them. A terribly noisy place. It was cacophony going all the time, out of doors. And the second one, I recall, was something



called Na Mac. I don't remember the name of the soldering shop. And then I spent about three weeks in the loading and shipping division of Magnavox Victrola.

Perhaps the most important thing I got out of that work was the realization in my gut and head of what job monotony means. I had not seen job monotony written about in any novel that I had read, and I intended to go into it in this novel because it is a terrible affliction for many workers. To repeat, as I did with the egg beater, the same operation about 900 times a day, and to do that every day is very difficult to sustain for some people. Now, I remember there was a middle-aged Ukrainian woman Ukrainian-born woman, working beside me with a small machine in which she repeated the same operation more than that--about 1,500 times a day. And she wasn't affected by job monotony. But many of the workers were.

Now, however, these weeks of work were interrupted in a highly contrasting way by one week of film work. There was an emergency call for me from Delmer Daves, who had directed both Destination Tokyo and Pride of the Marines. He had written a film called The Red House, and he was directing it on location in Sonora, California. He found that there were some things in the script that would not work, and he was too busy with his directing to rewrite them himself. And he urgently wanted me to come up because



he felt he could tell me the problem and that I could rewrite to his satisfaction and that he could depend upon me to do it within the week that he had before he had to shoot the material. My agent, without my knowing it, asked an incredible price for that week, and apparently he and the producer were so boxed in they said yes, and it was \$10,000 for one week's work. So I drove up there and worked very intensively for the week and did the work. There were two other things to mention. One is that one of the stars of the film was Edward G. Robinson and he wanted to talk; so every evening after supper--I had supper with him every evening--and then after supper, before I went back to work again, we'd walk for about a half an hour. And this was very pleasant, and I mention it because there will be some sequels to it.

GARDNER: Okay.

MALTZ: Now, on the way back I stopped to pick up an old man who wanted a hitch. In those days I always picked up people on the road because it was a chance to talk with varied persons. And when this man picked up his old-fashioned Gladstone bag and began to walk toward my car, I saw that he was unable to take a step of more than a few inches at a time. This man turned out-- His name was Stevenson, and I didn't know it at that time but I was to write my next novel, The Journey of Simon McKeever, about him.



He told me that he was running away from an old-age home and that he wanted to get to Glendale, where there was a doctor that could cure his arthritis. We traveled together (and paused for meals) for about eight hours, as I recall, and I found him an absolutely fascinating man. He was a tall, broad-shouldered, good-looking man, born in Ireland, with a slight Irish accent, and he had so much life force and spirit and laughter about him that I was enormously taken by him. He was, by the way, eighty-three years old and had not hesitated to go out on the road hitchhiking because he wanted to get cured of his arthritis, and he expected very confidently to go back to work as soon as he was cured. He had been working, he said, until three years before. When we got to Glendale I asked him whether he had money for a motel and he didn't; so I took him to a motel and paid the night's lodging and gave him some money (I forget, not much) and said goodbye to him, and went away thinking what a marvelous man I had met. I didn't know for some months later that I would find I wanted to write about him.

I then went back to those factory jobs, and at the end of May, with my family, I went to the island of Catalina, where we had rented a house and where I had hoped to work uninterruptedly for about four months. I had several projects that I had in mind to work on. One, of course, was the novel.





But also I believe that it was on my way up to Sonora that I stopped overnight in Modesto, California, and there I wandered into one of the open gambling saloons they have, where I fell to talking with a young man who told me things about his life that I felt I wanted to use for a story. I had a title for it called "Evening in Modesto," I recall, and I wanted to work on that story as well. I might mention now (of course, I'll forget later) that although I never quite finished it as a story, I happened to tell it to someone I knew, whose name I no longer recall, who asked me whether I had any material he might use for a film. This was the next year, I guess. He was in some sort of an experimental project at RKO under Dore Schary, and I told him this story. Since it involved migrant workers on farms, it was something that he wanted very much to do. And so I went in and told the story to the people at RKO, and although it was unfinished, they bought it for \$15,000. I was so casual about it that I never even told my agent, and she said later that I was foolish because she could have gotten a lot more money for it.

I found that my work on Johnny Dragoo did not go along very well. In part I think that there were things about the material that I was having difficulty in handling. I had never done and, as a matter of fact, still have never done, a novel that handles a character's life over a good many years. All of my novels have been compressed within a short space of time.



GARDNER: Right. A dramatic situation.

MALTZ: Yes. And I suppose that this is in part my early dramatic training and the thing that I feel comfortable with. I'm not sure of all the reasons, but I know that it didn't move along well. But another reason why I think it didn't move along well was that I was still very shaken up inside over the controversy and disturbed by it, and that this affected me when I was alone at my desk.

I believe that I have omitted mentioning two activities that may have started in 1945 but I know were going on in 1946. I was asked by the secretary of the Authors Guild in New York, Louise Sillcox, if I would not organize a western branch of the Authors Guild in Los Angeles. I undertook to do this, and, for me now, it is a good example of the kind of activity I should not have engaged in because it involved the writing of very long letters to Louise Sillcox and Oliver La Farge, and meetings and phone calls with people out here, and then meetings when we got together. And, actually, we got a good branch in existence, and I was made the chairman, or president, or something like that. But I don't remember what we really achieved, and I just think it was an example of my dutifully being a good citizen when I should have been giving that time to writing.

But I was also, and this I know was worthwhile, a member of the executive board of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions [Committee], which was an organization out here



with real clout. Harlow Shapley, the Harvard astronomer (and I understand a very great astronomer), was the chairman of it, was the national chairman. And the [committee], which had a large membership including people from all cultural and scientific areas, was, I think, on the side of the angels whenever social problems arose. All of the records of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions [Committee] are in some university library. I don't know whether it's Wisconsin or whether it's UCLA. Someone who would know, I could call up and ask, is the widow of the man who was secretary of it.

GARDNER: I suspect I would know about it if it were at UCLA.

MALTZ: The secretary of it was George Pepper (incidentally, a fine violinist who had had to give up the violin because he developed a physical problem in playing, which I understand is sort of an industrial disease of violinists). I don't know which university.

Now, in September '46 I was called back and was asked by Frank Ross to make some changes in The Robe. The Robe was expected to go into production immediately, and I worked for two and a half weeks but then had to interrupt for almost three weeks because my wife had some major surgery. I then returned to The Robe for a month and was finished by mid-November. And then it didn't go into





production after all because Howard Hughes took over the studio. And he disliked the project and not only wouldn't let Frank Ross make it at RKO but he wouldn't allow him to take it elsewhere. He acted as though the project was his personal enemy. And it was not until 1951 that Ross was able to get it away from RKO because Howard Hughes had left the company. [tape recorder turned off]

While I was at RKO on this occasion, I saw something of Adrian Scott, whom I had known only casually and found him a most attractive man, charming, sincere, modest, and keenly intelligent. He had a fascinating project which became the film Crossfire. Now, that was based upon a novel called The Brick Foxhole, which had been written by Richard Brooks while he was still, I think, in the marine corps in World War II . . . or perhaps it was just after he had come out of the marine corps. It was a mystery novel in which, as I recall, it turned out that a man who had been murdered had been so because homosexuality was involved. Interestingly enough, I had been sent the book by Gadget Kazan about a year before with the request that I read it and see whether I wanted to try and turn it into a play which then Kazan would direct. And I didn't see it as anything that was of interest to me. But Adrian wanted to do it now as a film, and he had come up with something that was very fascinating.



He wanted the motivation for the killing to be, not homosexuality, but anti-Semitism. And that made it really a more contemporary story from the point of view of the United States in the year 1946 since we had just come through World War II and the Holocaust. In the course either of my discussing the project with him or of my reading something that the writer on the film, John Paxton, had wrote, I made a small contribution (I said "had wrote," didn't I? For God's sake, had written. My mind was. . . .), I made a small contribution to the film. Before I mention it, I want to say in passing that the Adrian Scott-John Paxton collaboration, which was ruined by the blacklist, was something wonderful. They had known each other in New York when they both worked on a theater magazine, and they had worked on two previous films together. They were friends and fine working partners together. And Paxton, who is a very good writer, also says that he needed to work with someone and that he was not a self-starter, and that Adrian was a marvelous partner for him.

But Adrian was looking for some-- He was looking for either motivation or characterization, or both, for the character of the detective who discovers the reason for the murder. Now, due to my research work for the novel The Beautiful Maria, about the Know-Nothing movement that



I had never written, I suggested to Adrian that if this detective, who was an Irish Catholic, had had a grandfather or grandparent who had suffered in some of the anti-Catholic riots of the 1840s or fifties or seventies, he would be more sensitive to the question of racial prejudice. Now, Adrian was born a Catholic, and of Irish background, but he didn't know anything about that history. Fascinating! It had not come down in his family. He had not happened to do any research about it, and I know that in general it was not something that came into history books. So that I was able to provide it and he leaped at that and said, "Oh, that's just wonderful," and he was able to use it. And it worked very well in the film. Now, there's a topper to this.

In 1977 I was in the hospital because I had suffered some malpractice, and in order to be cured from what had happened, I was facing some major surgery. At that time I got an article written by two men at NYU who were working for their Ph.D.s in film and who had been advised by someone (whose name I forget) that I might be able to check some of the data in their article. As a matter of fact, a great deal in their article was completely erroneous, because they had the automatic concept that Crossfire was, of course, Edward Dmytryk's Crossfire since he had directed it. And they had all sorts of fanciful theories about how the script was



what it was because of its connection with previous projects that Dmytryk had done. And I immediately checked with John Paxton and got a copy of the letter to him, and Paxton reinforced my memory that the script had been finished before Dmytryk ever saw it. So we both wrote our comments to these authors, I scribbling very fast the night before my surgery. And then I came upon a footnote which said that Dore Schary, in an oral history interview, had revealed that it was he who had given Adrian Scott the concept of a detective whose grandfather had run up against prejudice because he was an Irish Catholic. [laughter] Now, here is Schary (I'm going to leap ahead), whose contribution to Crossfire was basically that of not preventing it from being made, because the script was finished before he became production head of RKO and then, after Scott and Dmytryk were blacklisted, he received awards for the film. And now that Adrian is dead, he told this lie in an interview.

GARDNER: I wonder who it was done with? Probably with a film institute.

MALTZ: No, I don't think so. I don't know with whom. I didn't make a record of it.

GARDNER: I'll check and see.

MALTZ: Yes, this thing has been published now, I presume in some theater magazine. I didn't even keep their names.





And I don't mind in this oral history, when we run up against things as blatantly outrageous as that, putting it down in stone.

In mid-November, having finished the work on The Robe, mid-November '46, I returned to my own work. But in the months since I had picked up the man Stevenson, I'd kept thinking about him, and I felt now that I wanted to write a short story about him. And so I began it, and before I had gone too many pages, I realized that I couldn't do it, couldn't do the story that had begun to develop in my mind in a short time, and so I felt, well, I better make this a short novel. And then I decided that I wanted to know more about where he came from and the home he was running away from, and so I got in my car and started back to Sacramento, went up to Sacramento.

He had told me enough for me to find the place. It was different from my novel. He had never become a citizen of the United States because when he was a young man and had emigrated to Canada, he decided to move into the United States for purposes of work, and he just walked across the bridge; nobody ever stopped him. And down the years he had taken out first citizenship papers on several occasions but following-- Since he was a worker in the oil fields, he would move from field to field as work opportunities came up, and he never settled long enough in one place to



really get his citizenship. Consequently, he didn't have social security, and when he got arthritis, there was no place for him to go except the county old-age home. So I went to the old-age home and found it to be, on the outside, a very nice-looking building that had been built by WPA; but inside it was pretty awful. I remember a very large room with rows of beds; I think there must have been about four long rows of beds with no space between them, with no more space between them than someone needed to walk. And perhaps there were footlockers, but I don't recall. I know that the mattresses were of straw. And the sight of old men lying there doing nothing except waiting to die was a terrible one. There was a library, small, in which there were some men who were reading, and I always remember one man with palsied hands reading Havelock Ellis's Dance of Life, which fascinated me.

And I went through this room, and I guess maybe there were several more, wondering whether I might find Stevenson. I didn't. I asked for him by name and nobody knew about him. And as I was leaving the building, some man who worked in it passed, and I asked him and he said, "Oh, yes, I know him. He's in the county hospital. He went there for an operation." So I went to the county hospital, and I asked for his name and got it, and it so happened that I walked up to his bed in a ward within perhaps



fifteen minutes or a half an hour after he had been brought down from surgery for a prostate operation. And he opened his eyes as I looked at him, I don't recall whether I even mentioned his name, or perhaps I did, and he said, "Oh, I know you." He said, "You're the man who picked me up on the road." And so we then talked a little bit, and, as I recall, I came back the next day and talked with him more, and then maintained a correspondence with him all through the writing of the book. And I'll tell later what happened in our relationship.

I then went around in the Sacramento area investigating old-age homes because I didn't want to have my character in-- I wanted to have him a more universal type, not have him a noncitizen. And so I went to various homes and told the proprietors that I had a relative who needed a place, and I wanted to see their place and find out what things were like. And, as a result, I got the information I needed about the way these homes operated. And I went home and went to work with a good deal of enthusiasm, and I worked out an outline by the end of the year. Now, I just want to sum up and say this had been a year in which I had spent only four months on film work. And I hoped to continue on that basis or do even better in the years to come.





GARDNER: Better in the sense of more fiction and less film?

MALTZ: Of more fiction and less film. My agent thought that she could now get \$5,000 a week for me, which was unheard of. There wasn't anyone else getting that, and that would mean that I'd only need, say, four weeks of work a year to get along splendidly on the level at which I lived. And I would have been just as interested in just doing four weeks of rewriting a script that needed more work rather than spending more time and getting a solo credit.

GARDNER: Right.

MALTZ: So things looked extremely rosy for my fiction work at that time.

GARDNER: Why don't we stop here since the tape is about to run out, and then we can take up on the next tape.

MALTZ: Yes.



TAPE NUMBER: XVI, SIDE ONE

NOVEMBER 21, 1978

MALTZ: I began to write the story of Stevenson, whose name I changed to Simon McKeever, in early January 1947, and the writing went along at a good rate.

Now, I need to turn again to the political scene. In the turmoil of postwar conflicts, I personally went along with the positions taken by the Soviet Union and the Communist party. Now, on March 12, 1947, about a year or eleven months after the Fulton, Missouri, speech of Churchill, President Truman pronounced his Truman Doctrine in a speech to Congress. Professor [Denna Frans] Fleming, in volume one, page 446 of his The Cold War and Its Origins, wrote the following summation: that all revolutions everywhere in the world were forbidden by Truman. "Wherever a communist rebellion developed the United States would suppress it . . . The United States would become the world's anti-communist, anti-Russian policeman . . . The president went on to say that the . . . method by which this nation was born was outlawed. There would be no more revolutions thereafter, in spite of the fact that many hundreds of millions of people lived a miserable existence under the misrule of a few."

This was a period in American life in which there was tremendous discussion of the atom bomb: Should we use it at



once on Russia? There was sudden suspicion of the loyalty oath of all physicists, all scientists involved in the making of the bomb. Then, in the same month, Truman suddenly gave an executive order calling for the examination of the loyalty of all federal government employees, more than two million of them. And he ordered the creation of loyalty review boards who could examine the records of all federal employees, and see to it that those whose loyalty was questionable would be dismissed from government work. Now, it's interesting to reflect that it had not been necessary in wartime to check on the loyalty of all government employees, but here, by a presidential edict, it was necessary now in peacetime. Why was that so? Apparently, in part, it was a demagogic attempt on Truman's part to repair the results of the 1946 congressional election, which swung votes to the Republicans on the grounds that the Democrats were soft on communism. In a larger part, I believe that it was designed to create in the country a cold-war psychology that would support larger military budgets, military aid to selected countries abroad, the creation of the CIA, and the establishment of foreign military bases. And furthermore to create an atmosphere in which any criticism of Truman's foreign policy would be made difficult and would seem to be disloyal.



Now, the result of Truman's Loyalty Oath was an immediate poisoning of the national psychology, because people said: "Who is loyal? Who is not? Is my neighbor loyal? How do I know he's loyal?" Carey McWilliams, in his book Witch Hunt-- [tape recorder turned off] The practical result of this poisoning of the national psychology was that very shortly there began to be state loyalty oaths for all employees, and city loyalty oaths and loyalty oaths for faculty members of universities, and oaths in public schools, in defense industries, in trade unions, and in other sectors. It's perhaps worth pausing for a moment to quote from The American Inquisition, 1945-1960, by Cedric Belfrage [p.130].

Scene: Reno, Nevada. The 105 employees of Brodsky's gambling saloon--dealers, B-girls, pit bosses, waitresses, janitors--are lined up before Murray Brodsky, who exhibits a loyalty-oath form.

BRODSKY: All right, you guys. Either sign or get out.

GIRL WHO POSES NUDE IN A CHAMPAGNE GLASS: Me too?

BRODSKY: Yeah, put your John Hancock here and don't argue.

[laughter] Isn't that something?

GARDNER: They all had Communists in a champagne glass.

MALTZ: Another by-product of Truman's loyalty order was the attorney general's list of "subversive"





organizations. This list was compiled by J. Edgar Hoover's boys and presented to the public by Attorney General Clark. It was a list of seventy-eight organizations that were allegedly subversive, and the list was later extended to several hundred [organizations].

Past membership in one of these organizations, or support of it in any way, was instant evidence of disloyalty. All government employees had to swear that they never had supported these organizations in any way. If they had supported them they were fired. And if they lied, they would be prosecuted for perjury. So, for instance, the term came, of "premature antifascist." That is to say, if you had attended a rally of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, or given a dollar to someone who did, and you had done so before the United States was in World War II, then you were a premature antifascist, and disloyal.

This list was utterly arbitrary. There were no meaningful standards. There was no opportunity for organizations to defend themselves against the charge of subversion. And this list then became used by states, cities, private industries, and so on in the testing of the loyalty of citizens.

GARDNER: It still is used.

MALTZ: It still is used?



GARDNER: In certain obscure cases.

MALTZ: Well, it's illegal now, I believe.

GARDNER: Well, loyalty oaths on a statewide level are illegal, I believe, but for certain government organizations that list is still presented.

MALTZ: Really? I didn't know that. Now, another result of the loyalty oath was that informers were asked by the federal government to come forward and promised that their identity would never be revealed. There was one earlier period in American history, from 1798 to 1800, when a similar atmosphere prevailed. Under John Adams, the Alien and Sedition Laws were passed, and I quote from Claude Bowers's Jefferson and Hamilton, which is subtitled The Struggle for Democracy in America. He says [p.376], "The purpose of the Sedition bill was to crush the opposition press and silence criticism of the ruling powers." In the debate on these bills in the House of Representatives, Edward Livingston, a follower of Jefferson said this [p.378]: "The country will swarm with informers, spies, delators, and all the odious reptile tribe that breed in the sunshine of despotic power." And he was describing the United States in the years that followed Truman's loyalty oath. It is for this reason that it is completely inaccurate to refer to the McCarthy era. McCarthy certainly took center stage in the fifties, for a period of the fifties, but, properly



speaking, these must be called the Truman-McCarthy years, because it was Truman's loyalty oath that created the atmosphere in which McCarthy could flourish.

There is, however, an interesting contradiction about Truman. It appears that, to some extent, he was utterly blind about the havoc he was causing in the country, because at one point he said that the House Un-American Activities Committee is the most un-American thing in the country today. And in the film that was made about him, called Give 'Em Hell, Harry, he made a magnificent speech in Boston against McCarthy. And one can only assume that he did not connect the role of the committee or of McCarthy with the atmosphere that he himself had created. I don't think that he was a hypocrite, but in this area he was certainly less than intelligent.

GARDNER: Do you have any idea as to what the forces were that led him to. . . ?

MALTZ: Well, I think they were the things I mentioned at the beginning: one, the fact that the Democrats had lost seats in the 1946 congressional election, with the Republicans charging that they were soft on communism. So he wanted to show that they weren't soft on communism, and the loyalty oath was that. I think he didn't foresee the consequences. And then there was the fact that he didn't want any criticism of his foreign policy. Remember,





at that time Henry Wallace (I'm going to come to Henry Wallace), who had been first secretary of agriculture under Roosevelt, then vice-president under Roosevelt, then, I think, secretary of the interior under Roosevelt until his death, and then under Truman, broke with Truman on foreign policy, and was going around the country making speeches attacking Truman's foreign policy. And Truman wanted to shut him up, as he wanted to shut up others who were following Wallace.

GARDNER: And succeeded beyond his wildest dreams.

MALTZ: Oh boy, yes! Now, I'd like to mention a few books as reference on this which come purely from my own library. There are, of course, many more. One is the best compilation of what actually happened from 1945 to 1960 in the United States, and that's Cedric Belfrage's The American Inquisition, published by Bobbs, Merrill in '73; Grand Inquest by Telford Taylor, Simon and Schuster, 1955. Telford Taylor had been chief prosecutor at the War Crimes Trial in Nuremberg and is at present on the faculty of Columbia University Law School. And Witch Hunt, by Carey McWilliams, 1950, Little, Brown and Company. [tape recorder turned off]

I mentioned there had been a great debate about the atomic weapon after Churchill's Fulton, Missouri, speech. But, as time passed, that changed, the debate passed, and there was a tremendous campaign in the press and radio that



grew and grew about the Russian menace and its fifth column of Reds inside the country. And any position left of center began to be called Red. Henry Wallace, whom I've just referred to, was called a Red, and he had eggs and rotten vegetables thrown at him at various times when he spoke. And at one time, somewhat later, the New York Times, which did not print his speeches, even refused to accept paid advertisements that would have carried the text of his speeches. This in a newspaper that says "All the News That's Fit to Print."

GARDNER: Right. The newspaper of record.

MALTZ: Cedric Belfrage, whose work I've just referred to, gives some illustrations of the atmosphere of the period [p.56]. When the House Committee on Un-American Activities wanted to increase its budget for 1946, [John] Rankin, at that time the head of the committee, and a man who referred openly in Congress to "niggers and kikes," reminded the Congress "of the Russian custom of indiscriminate rape," and he was given a budget of \$125,000. "[Rankin] had clarified HUAC ideology by recalling that 'after all, the Ku Klux Klan is an American institution; our job is to investigate foreign isms and alien organizations.' Courteous questioning of anti-Semite Gerald Smith added such show-business names as Orson Welles, Ingrid Bergman, Eddie Cantor, and Frank Sinatra to the list of citizens



who would need to clear their skirts." In the atmosphere created by Truman, the House Committee on Un-American Activities began to conduct investigations at a rate it never had before. "By the fall of 1946 HUAC had fed into the contempt mill George Marshall of the Civil Rights Congress, the Rev. Richard Morford of NCASF [National Committee for American and Soviet Friendship], and nine leaders of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee (relief for Spanish Republican survivors) including novelist Howard Fast and Edward Barsky, a New York surgeon. . . ." They had declined to give the names of contributors to their funds for Spanish relief and declined to give the names of those to whom funds were sent, since they knew that the names of people to whom they sent funds would be turned over to the Franco government, and the names of people who contributed would cause them to be brought before the Committee. So, they ended up with three- and six-month jail terms. And in December '46 Harlow Shapley, chairman of the ASP--Art, Sciences, and Professions [Committee]--was called before HUAC, and he called Rankin a fascist. This was only one of thousands of incidents in a scene that was flaming higher and higher every day. For those who didn't live through the period, Belfrage is indispensable reading if they want a picture of what occurred at that time.



One of the things that also happened was that several dozen liberal commentators on radio, news commentators, were dropped from their jobs, and one of them was William Shirer, later to be author of The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich.

The various events that I've been touching upon led to a mobilization against them in the summer of 1947, in Los Angeles. The Arts, Sciences, and Professions [Committee] organized a Conference on Thought Control in the United States, which lasted for three days at the Beverly Hills Hotel. It's revealing to bear in mind that the Truman executive order for a loyalty oath had occurred in March of that year, and so quickly had changes occurred in the United States, that already by July the alarms were being sounded. [tape recorder turned off] The various papers that were given at this conference dealt with the legal aspects of thought control and what was occurring in the press, radio, literature, music, the arts and architecture, medicine, science and education, film, and with actors. The proceedings were printed by the Arts, Sciences, and Professions [Committee] of the Progressive Citizens of America, and the copyright is by the Progressive Citizens of America. This was not published by a regular publisher, so I hope that it is to be found in the library, because it is a remarkable picture of what was going on at





that time in the United States. The opening session was chaired by Howard Koch, a very distinguished screenwriter, and the speakers were John Cromwell, a director, John Howard Lawson, Bernard Smith, who was a film story editor and had been chief editor of Knopf publishing house, and Norman Corwin. And I would like to read a bit from the comments from the paper of Norman Corwin:

Overnight, at the drop of an issue, you can become a Red, although you may not know Karl Marx from Groucho Marx. Opposition to the Truman Doctrine became prima facie evidence of Communist leanings, if not connections. Objection to the disloyalty bill on any ground, legal, moral or political, became prima facie evidence of disloyalty itself. If you fight for lower rents, higher wages, better working conditions; if you are against silicosis in the mines or fraudulent advertising; if you are for health insurance and protection of the rights of the foreign-born; if you favor consumer cooperatives and fair employment practices; if you are for equality of opportunity and education; if you are against Jim Crowism and the poll tax; if you are for foreign cultural exchange; if you stand for one world or any of the doctrines tributary to it; if you believe literally what is said in the great documents of freedom upon which the United States and the United Nations are established, then you are suspect of participation in a colossal international Communist front.

That's an excellent summation. I spoke in the panel on literature, and the title of my piece was "The Writer as the Conscience of the People." [tape recorder turned off] The conference ended with the following



statement by the participants:

The law may be utilized either as an instrument of thought control, or as the guardian of the freedom of speech, press, assembly and religion through which the democratic process functions. We ask you to take a clear stand, Mr. President, affirming the full power of the law for the protection of the people of our country, and not as an instrument of economic intimidation and political power. We ask you specifically to take the following steps: one, to abolish the discriminatory and un-American loyalty tests; two, to instruct the Attorney General of the United States to dismiss the charges against all those who are today being prosecuted for alleged contempt of the Thomas-Rankin committee; three, to join your illustrious predecessor in emphatic rejection of the Thomas-Rankin committee's illegal methods and objectives; four, to speak out against those who are denying meeting places and freedom of the press and the air to the people.

I believe the denial of meeting places would refer, certainly, to Paul Robeson, who had not been allowed to sing in various towns and cities in the United States. And I don't know whether it also applied to Henry Wallace, but it certainly would apply to different organizations in various communities.

We come now to the investigation of the film industry by the House committee. This committee had made prior efforts to investigate the film industry. There is a book that will be published next year by Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, by Doubleday (which



as yet has no title\*), which gives the specific history of these various attempts. The most important fact about this history is that, when the right-wing senators Wheeler and Nye made moves for an investigation of the film industry in 1941, the motion picture company executives got together in a united front to prevent it. They hired Wendell Willkie, the Republican candidate for president in the 1940 election, as their counsel. And the investigation bill never went through. In the spring and summer of 1947, the committee, with its new chairman, Parnell Thomas of New Jersey, came out for secret hearings in an executive session. I might mention that the background of Parnell Thomas was that of a stockbroker.

Jack Warner and Louis B. Mayer and others were known to have testified, and some things about their testimony were leaked when the committee wanted to, but their testimonies as a whole were not revealed. I note, in a scrapbook that I have of the events of that time, that I didn't cut any clippings of this executive session. And what it means to me now is that apparently I was not concerned at that time. I didn't find it to be any threat, let's say, to the community I lived in or myself personally.

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\* The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930-1960.





GARDNER: But you must have known that, given the circumstances of a loyalty oath and so on, and given your own affiliations, that if they did come knocking, yours would be one of the first doors that they would knock upon.

MALTZ: Well, apparently I was not thinking of it, because I remember that when I got the subpoena I was surprised.

This is the point at which to mention the role of an organization called the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals. It had been created in 1944 to combat "a growing impression that this industry is made up of and dominated by Communists, radicals, and crackpots." It was a militant anti-Communist, pro-free enterprise group. The committee was led by Rupert Hughes, a screenwriter who had also written a biography of George Washington, by Adolphe Menjou, John Wayne, Ward Bond, and other actors; by Sam Wood, a director; writers Ayn Rand, Fred Niblo, Jr., and Morrie Ryskind; and James K. McGuinness, who may have been a writer or an executive, I'm not sure; and by Roy Brewer, who was an important addition from the trade union movement, since he was head of the IATSE [International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees]. And the alliance asked the House Committee to investigate the motion picture industry.



Now, I guess I haven't mentioned that I was again spending the summer on the island of Catalina, where I was working on my McKeever novel, and I interrupted only to write this speech for the Conference on Thought Control. The elementary question of why the House Committee chose to investigate Hollywood before it investigated universities and trade unions and so on, was that it was purely for publicity reasons. Hollywood made copy in a big way, and people paid attention to it.

I received my subpoena on September 17, calling for my appearance in Washington about a month later. I no longer recall whether I was summoned to be in Washington at the time the hearings opened, which was a week before I myself testified, or whether I went there of my own volition with the other men earlier, or whether I was summoned for the day I testified. I've garbled this, but I think you can make it out. [laughter]  
GARDNER: Right. We can clarify it later.

MALTZ: Yes. I see a note in the diary that I kept at that time, which was "Got a subpoena from the Rankin-Thomas committee, and had a momentary shock." But the next day, I recorded that I was very tense over it, so it seems as though I had received it without really anticipating it. Now, this was the last of my entries in the diary for not only that year but forever, except



for two days in 1948 that I'll refer to later on.  
Quite clearly, I became too busy with what followed  
after the subpoena to continue with my four-line daily  
notes in my diary. Even four lines were too much.  
[tape recorder turned off]

I was saying that at the time I received the subpoena I was working on Simon McKeever, and I suddenly realized that there's some contradiction in my records as to whether or not I started McKeever in January of '47, which I said earlier, or whether I didn't start it until August, because some other record says that when I got the subpoena, I'd been writing McKeever for one month, and that I had eighty pages in hand, and that it was going fine. Now I think I can solve the discrepancy. I think what happened was that in January I began to plan the book, after I had gone up to Sacramento, and that it took me, probably, with the other things I had to do, five, six months to do all the planning, and then I began to write. And I think that's definite from my records that by September 17 I had eighty pages and I had been writing for one month.

But from September 22, I see from my records, five days after I got my subpoena, until the week of January 11, '48, I couldn't write anything on the novel. I



only remember some of the activities that took up my time for those fourteen weeks, but they were all connected with the fight of the committee. Here I have some of the activities that I do remember. Some forty-one or forty-three subpoenas were given out in the course of several days by federal marshals, and the committee shortly made clear what we were ascertaining, by questioning people, that the subpoenas went to opposing groups: to left-wingers who were going to be under attack by the committee, and to right-wingers who were going to support it and who were called "friends" by the committee itself. The fact that the committee called them "friends" led us, who were presently to be known as the "Unfriendly Nineteen," to create that word for ourselves. We placed an advertisement in the trade papers announcing that we were indeed not friends of this committee, and we signed ourselves the Unfriendly Nineteen. At that time it seemed like an excellent idea, but it proved to be a most unfortunate mistake, because the name unfriendly was used for us years afterward, and still is referred to today, out of context of the reason why we had used it. And, consequently, it seems to be a description of nineteen hostile--

GARDNER: Unfriendly people.

MALTZ: --unfriendly, disagreeable people.





GARDNER: The nineteen referred to the ones who were originally subpoenaed?

MALTZ: Yes. Now I'm going to name them and talk about them. There were thirteen writers: Alvah Bessie, Bertolt Brecht, Lester Cole, Richard Collins, Gordon Kahn, Howard Koch, Ring Lardner, Jr., John Howard Lawson, Samuel Ornitz, Robert Rossen, Waldo Salt, Dalton Trumbo, myself. There were four directors: Herbert Biberman, Edward Dmytryk, Lewis Milestone, Irving Pichel. There was one producer, Adrian Scott, and one actor, Larry Parks. I think I'll mention now that, of the nineteen, there were four who were not members of the Communist party, and the rest were. And since, in an article in the L.A. Times by Richard Shere, there was an erroneous mention of the number of Jews who were members of the Hollywood Ten, an error that I sent him a letter about, but neither he nor the Times would publish. I think I want to mention that the nineteen divided into nine Christian, nine Jews, and one of mixed parentage.

Two points: Bertolt Brecht never functioned with the group that kept being called the Unfriendly Nineteen, or the Nineteen, because he was a noncitizen. While he had received a subpoena, he couldn't act in a political way. And I also mentioned that once the Nineteen got together, I swept under the rug my



resentment of the ill-treatment I had received from Rossen and Milestone in the film deal for The Cross and the Arrow. Our activities, as a group of Nineteen, were as follows: first, there was a campaign to get the motion picture executives, and as many people in the film industry as possible, to oppose the investigation. In line with this, I want to read a portion of an advertisement that we put into the trade papers. I have no memory of writing this, but from the style, I think I must have participated in it. This was an open letter to the motion picture industry on the issue of "Freedom of the Screen from Political Intimidation and Censorship," and it was signed by all of the nineteen. In it, we said:

Let us quote Rankin directly from the Congressional Record, July 19, 1945, "But I want to say to the gentlemen from California that these appeals"--

(let me explain, the appeals meant appeals to investigate Hollywood)

--"are coming to us from the best people in California. Some of the best producers in California are very much disturbed because they're having to take responsibility for some of the loathesome, filthy, insinuating, un-American undercurrents that are running through various pictures sent throughout the country to be shown to the children of this nation." Which films? we ask. Margie? Pride of the Marines? The Best Years of Our Lives? Let us be clear. The issue is not the historically phony one of the subversion of the screen by Communists, but whether the screen will remain free. The issue is not the "radicalism" of nineteen writers, directors, and actors, who are to be singled out, if possible, as fall guys.



They don't count. No one of them has ever been in control of the films produced in Hollywood. The goal is control of the industry through intimidation of the executive heads of the industry and through further legislation. The goal is a lifeless and reactionary screen that will be artistically, culturally, and financially bankrupt. In 1941 Willkie said, "The industry is prepared to resist such pressure with all of the strength at its command." What will the industry say in October 1947 to Rankin and Thomas? Who will decide what stories are to be bought, what artists hired, what films released? Who will hold the veto? Who will be in control? Who?

I want to comment, thirty years later, that I think just about everything that we said was at issue proves to have been correct, excepting one very, very important thing: that the goal of the committee would be a screen that would be financially bankrupt. Because, first of all, it was not the goal of the committee to bankrupt the film industry, and indeed the film industry continued to make profits after the blacklist came into existence, so that we were dead wrong on that point. But I suppose it can be forgiven because we were trying to persuade the producers that the thing most important to them, their pocketbooks, might be hurt.

GARDNER: That's right. Did that run in the dailies? in the Daily Variety, Hollywood Reporter?

MALTZ: The Daily Variety. Did I give the date?

GARDNER: I don't think that--

MALTZ: Would you like the date? I think I ought to. Yes, it was in Variety and in the Reporter. And this was



on October 16, 1947.

GARDNER: Right before the hearing.

MALTZ: Yes.





TAPE NUMBER: XVI, SIDE TWO

NOVEMBER 29, 1978

GARDNER: Now, as you mentioned, we somehow overlooked Naked City--

MALTZ: Yes.

GARDNER: --chronologically.

MALTZ: In the spring, in March 1947, when I was at work planning the Simon McKeever novel, I got the opportunity for the kind of film job that, at that time, I really preferred over others--namely, a job of revising an unsatisfactory screenplay with good material. This was the film Naked City, which came from some original research done by Malvin Wald in collaboration with the producer Mark Hellinger. Hellinger told me that the idea for the film had been his, based upon a celebrated murder case in New York when he was a newspaperman there. Wald now says that the idea was his, based upon some general research he did in the police department files. I myself don't know what the truth is. However, Wald had very interesting materials for the film, but it was not a good screenplay, and Hellinger asked me if I wanted to go to work on it. I was happy to do so, and I did a complete revision, making real changes in characterization and aspects of the plot line and in scenes, and worked on it for a little



over a month--about five weeks. A few days later in September, when Jule Dassin was brought onto the film to direct it, Dassin, Hellinger, and I did some cutting together. It was a very pleasing job, and I think I was paid about \$15,000 for doing it. And I didn't know at the time I was writing it that Mark Hellinger was going to give me 5 percent of his end of the profits from the film. This turned out after I was blacklisted to be very useful indeed. I'll now come back--

GARDNER: Let me ask you a question or two about Naked City.

MALTZ: Yes.

GARDNER: Had you known Hellinger from the New York theater?

MALTZ: Oh, no, I had not known him from the New York theater.

GARDNER: Because he really is best known for that sort of production, isn't he?

MALTZ: No, he is not. No. You are thinking of this because a theater in New York is called the Mark Hellinger Theatre, but that was just a kind of tribute to him as a man. In New York, I don't believe he ever did any theater.

GARDNER: Oh, really?

MALTZ: He was a newspaperman, and he was a columnist, and a very celebrated and popular columnist. In fact, he



continued to write a column through the period of Naked City. I haven't really said anything about Hellinger. I had met him, just to be introduced, at Warner Brothers. When Pride of the Marines came out, he had liked the film so much that he personally took out a full-page ad in Variety to speak about it, and to speak about my screenplay. And so he obviously liked my work, and that was why he had come calling when he wanted a revision of Naked City. And that was a very happy experience with him, he was a very friendly man, very intelligent, and my relationship with him, brief as it was, was most cordial. I'm going to mention him later on again.

I haven't mentioned anything about Jules Dassin. I called him Jule, which was his American name. He became Jules after many years in France. But we were old friends, and it's interesting to note that he began his theater career acting in Yiddish in a communist theater in New York, Artef, and he is not French-born as many people assume.

GARDNER: Because of the in ending of his name. It looks so French.

MALTZ: Yes, it looks so French. Especially changing Jule to Jules. And he's a man of high talent, whom I've always liked and enjoyed as a friend.

Now, we come back to the hearings. And I left off at the point where subpoenas had been given out by federal



marshals. Those who were opposed to the committee who received subpoenas were the following nineteen people: Alvah Bessie, Bertolt Brecht, Lester Cole, Richard Collins, Gordon Kahn, Howard Koch, Ring Lardner, Jr., John Howard Lawson, Samuel Ornitz, Robert Rossen, Waldo Salt, Dalton Trumbo, and myself. Now, this divided up into four directors--Biberman, Dmytryk, Milestone and Pichel--one producer, [Adrian] Scott, one actor, [Larry] Parks, and the rest of us were writers. Since there has been mention made of the number of those who were Christian and those who were Jews, I will say that they divided nine and nine, with one who was of mixed parentage. And of this number, there were four who were not members of the Communist party.

When we came together, I swept under the rug my resentment of Rawson and Milestone for the way they had dealt with me on The Cross and the Arrow. We came to be known as the Unfriendly Nineteen, and the Ten began to be called the Unfriendly Ten, and in some instances still are, because of a tactic that we ourselves employed early in the game. The committee had announced that there were going to be witnesses friendly to it who would appear, and so we at one point had an advertisement in the trade papers, in which we announced with pride that we, indeed, were not friendly to the committee, and didn't intend to cooperate





with it, and we signed ourselves "the Unfriendly Nineteen." That turned out to be quite a misfortune, because the name stuck, but without the context behind it, and so it carried, down the years, the aura of a group of men who were unfriendly personalities. Oh, I already have done this, that's right. You know, I've done this, and I had a note--

GARDNER: Well, that's okay. We'll just go on from there.

MALTZ: It's repetitive. I see where we stopped, and I made a note for it, and so on. Well, there were a series of intensive meetings among the Nineteen (and just say in parentheses that Bertolt Brecht never met with us, because he was a noncitizen). These meetings were to find out how we felt about the investigation and to decide on policy, because we were not all known to one another. Of the nineteen, for instance, I had never met Pichel and Parks, and the only ones I had had much contact with were Bessie, Cole, Lawson, Ornitz, and Biberman--no, and Adrian, Adrian Scott--but not much with the others. It became clear that all of the nineteen were opposed to the committee, and this is the point at which to pause briefly to give a small bit of the history of the committee.

The House Committee on Un-American Activities had been created in 1938 by Congress to investigate any activity deemed to be un-American. Actually, the committee was an expression of the power of the right-wing forces in the



United States at that time, even though under the [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt administration. Now, there are law enforcement agencies to prosecute people who commit crimes-- local police, state police, the FBI, and so on. But this committee did not investigate crimes, and it didn't accuse people of crimes: it investigated the political ideas and activities of law-abiding citizens. It investigated the newspapers they subscribed to and the books they read. In short, it investigated the area that the Constitution forbids Congress to enter. The First Amendment of the Constitution doesn't say what citizens may or may not do. It says what Congress may not do: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." To our minds, then, this committee, by the very act that had created it, was unconstitutional. Now, the actual, practical job of the committee had been from the beginning to fight the New Deal of Franklin Roosevelt. And, in addition, to express and give a forum to all that was reactionary in the United States. Following Congressman [Martin] Dies, its first chairman, the chairman for many years was John Rankin of Mississippi, who was a vile example of all that was worst in American life. He was the man who



referred openly in Congress to "niggers" and "kikes," and called the Ku Klux Klan an acceptable American institution. The committee opposed a fair employment practices act. It was against emergency housing for veterans of World War II. It was openly against the New Deal. Moreover, the function of committees of Congress is to propose legislation. This is why they have investigations, and I believe that this is a very sensible procedure from the point of view of a working democracy. Committees hold hearings and investigations in order to gather facts, and upon the basis of the facts they have gathered, they propose legislation. However, in the first ten years of its existence--that is to say, from the time of its creations until the time that we were called to the stand--the legislative record of this committee was that one bill had been passed by Congress, and that was immediately declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. So, one had a right to ask, "What legislative purpose was it serving?"

From 1947 on, its practical purpose was to promote thought control in the United States, to eliminate from public life every individual whose political ideas and activities the members of the committee did not like, and, if possible, to deprive them of work. Dissent, which is the beating heart of a democracy, was to be ended. And there was general agreement amongst the Nineteen that this committee was a cancer in the American body politic. The nineteen men were also agreed that the purpose of this



investigation was for the committee to exert control over the film industry, and they agreed to oppose this and to carry out a public campaign against it.

GARDNER: Let me break in and ask a question. I have a couple of questions here. First of all, how were you nineteen selected from all the possible persons who might have been? Do you have any idea?

MALTZ: Yes, I think so. First, it's clear that they went after men who were--some of them who were most successful as screenwriters, but also very active organizationally, and were Communists. If they had chosen, let's say--instead of Trumbo, Lawson, Lardner, and myself--four unsuccessful writers, it wouldn't have had the same impact. Then, they chose men who had been very active organizationally in the community. Now, Herbert Biberman, for instance, who had done very well in the theater, didn't do well in film, and possibly the main reason why he didn't do well was that he spent so much time on political matters, such as the Anti-Nazi League. He neglected his film career. And Samuel Ornitz had never been a distinguished screenwriter, and by the time the case came along, he was unemployable. But he had been very active in the Anti-Nazi League and in various organizations. And they had in mind the dossiers that they were going to read out after each man came to the stand. I think that covers a good





many of the men. On the other hand, they chose someone like Larry Parks because he was a new star; I think the reason was that he was a new star. He was not an entrenched star who would be harder to knock over. They went after John Garfield later when they did their hearings in 1951 and '52, because then their power was greater. But to have gone after John Garfield in 1947 was a less comfortable thing for them than going after someone whose name was known, but who was not as entrenched as a star. And I think that this about explains it. They also brought in a number of nonparty members because they had been organizationally--for instance, Howard Koch--active and had followed policies that were inimical to the committee, and the committee wanted to knock off such people also. And I guess that's the best answer I can give you.

GARDNER: At the time that the Nineteen first started getting together, had there been a decision made as to legal counsel?

MALTZ: No. No, I'm going to go on to that.

GARDNER: Okay. Fine. I just wondered if--

MALTZ: No, no, no. Now, this policy decision on the part of the Nineteen to oppose the committee led to some very practical decisions. There would be a need for a central office for research work to be done about the committee.



There would be need for funds to pay for public advertisements. And, very important, attorneys would have to be found. In order to get the money to pay for all of these, there was a mutual decision to assess ourselves chunks of money that we would throw into a kitty. Now, several of the members of the Nineteen had been employed for some time. Several were very wealthy, or should have been if they hadn't been careless with high sums earned over many years. And others were working. So assessment suggestions were made by a small committee that went from zero to \$5,000. And a sum that I seem to recall was about \$60,000 was raised from the Nineteen. Money would also have to be needed to pay for costs of travel to Washington and remaining in Washington, despite the fact that the committee paid travel fare and a small per diem. At that time, we made no appeal for funds to anyone else.

On the legal question, the members of the Communist party had to meet privately, because their legal position was different from those who were not in the party. They, for instance, could not deny party membership without opening themselves to perjury, nor could they state freely that they were party members, which some of them wanted to do, because, as we quickly learned--I'm perhaps anticipating the discussions with the lawyers, but I'll state it now--if you went before this committee and stated,



"Yes, I am a member of the Communist party," then you had legally opened the door for the committee to say, "Very good, now give us the names of others you know in the party." If you refused to give the names, then you would be held in contempt, and the law would be upheld, that you were indeed in contempt because you had answered one question on the part of the committee. And so what would you have gained by saying, "Yes, I am a member of the Communist party." These were the problems that we confronted.

We agreed first on two lawyers, neither of whom I personally knew. One was Ben Margolis, who had come down around the year 1942 or so, I guess, from San Francisco, and the very first job he had had was writing the successful appeal brief for the zoot suit--

GARDNER: The Sleepy Lagoon--

MALTZ: --for the Sleepy Lagoon defendants. And on the basis of his brief, the conviction against them was reversed by the supreme court of California, and they were set free. And Margolis had been involved in various civil liberty cases since. The second, who was also a man deeply concerned with civil liberties matters, was Charles Katz, who was the personal lawyer of a number of the men. There were very lengthy discussions of the legal position that we might take, and the final decision we came to is best set forth in three letters that I want to include in the record.



Two of them are a reply to an inquiry from me of Margolis and Katz, which I made in 1973, and the third is a reply by Margolis to an inquiry by Ring Lardner in 1977.\*

Now, do I just give you the letters, or do you want me to read them--

GARDNER: How long are they?

MALTZ: Well, you take a look at them. [tape recorder turned off] Margolis and Katz recommended that-- Oh, let me say that some of the Communist members of the Nineteen conveyed to the non-Communist members the general position, then, that we intended to take, and, I'm sure, recommended that they take the same. But I don't know what they might have taken if brought to the stand, but I do know that in one instance, at least, it was the intention of Koch-- because he later said this in a public advertisement--to state on the stand that he was not a member of the Communist party, but he didn't believe that the committee had the right to ask these questions. And this brings me to a very important distinction that must be made. It would legally have been a violation of the law, I think--maybe conspiracy--if all of us had agreed as to what we would say on the stand. And we didn't do that, because our lawyers advised us about this. [tape recorder turned off] I didn't know, for instance, what Lawson was going to say

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\* See supporting documents.





when he got up as the first member of the Ten. I only knew he was going to oppose the committee as I would, and that he had been advised of the same legal pitfalls that I had. So that distinction was made. Margolis and Katz recommended that we ask Robert Kenny to join as chief counsel. Kenny, whom they knew, and I personally didn't, was former attorney general of California and was a man of lovely wit and great erudition. And the Nineteen went along with this suggestion. The attorneys talked with him, and he was in accord with the positions that we intended to take. He was very strong on civil liberties. Then Adrian Scott and Edward Dmytryk decided by themselves to get a more conservative lawyer who would represent them, and they asked Bartley Crum of San Francisco to be their attorney. Bartley Crum was a corporation lawyer who had represented the shipping companies in negotiations with the longshoremen. He had also been on a presidential committee on Palestine that issued a very important report.

Kenny, Margolis, and Katz welcomed Crum as an associate, and, apparently, he was in agreement as to the positions that were going to be taken, and advised Dmytryk and Scott similarly. I might mention here that the lawyers received some modest fees from us for their work until the time we were blacklisted; and thereafter until the time we went to jail, and even after that, they worked for no fees whatsoever.



The research group that we created had on it a number of people. I remember two only: one was my old and dear friend, Philip Stevenson, who dropped his personal work to do research, and another was Andreas Deinum, a young man of Dutch birth, with whom I was very friendly, and who is now, I believe, on the faculty of the University of Oregon. They turned up some marvelous materials which we were able to use in public meetings and for statements, and so on.

During this period, independent of anything the Nineteen did, the Committee for the First Amendment came into being. This committee was initially created by John Huston, William Wyler, Philip Dunne, and Alexander Knox--Dunne, a writer, and Knox an actor. The committee did not intend to support the Nineteen, but it did want to protest the investigation because it felt as we did about its purpose. In early October, it issued a public statement of which this is an excerpt:

We, the undersigned, as American citizens who believe in constitutional democratic government, are disgusted and outraged by the continuing attempt of the House Committee on Un-American Activities to smear the motion picture industry. We hold that these hearings are morally wrong, because any investigation into the political beliefs of the individual is contrary to the basic principles of our democracy. Any attempt to curb freedom of expression and to set arbitrary standards of "Americanism" is in itself disloyalty to both the spirit and the letter of the Constitution . . . Even at the risk of being called



Reds by those who deliberately refuse to make important distinctions, our chief concern is still to protect and defend the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

[tape recorder turned off]

By October, this committee had a membership of 500 prominent individuals, including many screen stars. It did much private talking to producers and executives, trying to get them to take a stand against the committee. The Screen Writers Guild and the Screen Actors Guild had issued similar statements attacking the committee, and in New York a Stop Censorship Committee was formed, which attacked the hearings. In the L.A. press, however, there was already a procommittee, anti-Red campaign going on in the Hearst press, which at that time was a very strong nationwide chain. And also, on the part of the Hollywood Reporter, a trade paper, and on the part of columnists Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons, who were purveyors of gossip who were read nationally.

The Progressive Citizens of America staged a testimonial rally at the Shrine Auditorium on October 15, very shortly before we left for Washington. I believe the Shrine seats about 5,000 people.

GARDNER: Some 5,000 or 6,000.

MALTZ: All of the Nineteen except Brecht were present. I think we sat on the stage, but I don't remember, and not



all of us spoke, and I find that I don't remember whether I did. Of course, we made good use of the research material there in exposing the history of the committee, and in discussing our general opposition to it.

The hearings were scheduled to open in Washington on October 20. We left on the sixteenth, yes, and arrived in Chicago, and that night we spoke to a meeting of about a thousand people in a hotel. We came to Washington the next afternoon, and that evening, or the one after, appeared in another public meeting before an audience that was only several hundred, because Washington was, after all, a company town. We stayed at the Shoreham Hotel, which was one of the best and most expensive hotels in Washington. A certain number of the wives of the Nineteen had come along, and their costs were assumed by the individuals. My wife was one of them. And as I recall, we were all quartered on one of two floors, and one of the rooms was a large suite where we could meet with our attorneys. The number of our attorneys was increased by two in Washington: Martin Popper, who was secretary, I think, of the Lawyers Guild, or president, and by a constitutional lawyer, Sam Rosenwein.

Bertolt Brecht was there, but he didn't come to our meetings. At some point I did meet him after the many years since the Theatre Union. I shook hands and said hello,





politely, as he did to me, but I had no more to do with him. I was still angry at him for the Theatre Union.

GARDNER: Was there any reason that he didn't participate with the others? Was it the language barrier?

MALTZ: No, it was that he was not a citizen.

GARDNER: It was his noncitizenship.

MALTZ: He was not a citizen, and he was going to take a stand that was all his own. And this was legally right. He was not going to be mixed up with us, on the advice of attorneys. And I might mention that several days after arrival, my wife and I left the Shoreham, because we wanted more quiet and privacy after the day was over than we could get at the Shoreham, where everybody was always knocking on everyone else's door to discuss the events of the day.

Just before the hearings opened, a most bizarre meeting occurred in our central room. We were told by our attorneys that the chief counsel of the CIO, Lee Pressman, a man whom we knew well by reputation, because his name had been in the newspapers a great many times, wanted to talk with us. We assumed that he wanted to meet to give us some advice and support, and so on. Instead we found ourselves listening to a man who was in a state close to hysteria. The central thing he had to say was that although we were taking a fine stand, that was not enough; that unless we literally destroyed the committee in this hearing, we would fail our obligation



to the American people. We looked at one another in great dismay. How the hell could we destroy the committee in this hearing? And he was a husky, good-looking man, I guess in his forties, and his quite evident hysteria was most disquieting and was a presage of what he was going to do within another two years. I will mention him later, because I met him again in Washington.

On Sunday night, October 19, with the hearing scheduled to begin the next day, there was a most important meeting between our attorneys and representatives of the film studios. By this time, the committee had leaked to the press the fact that it was going to ask for the blacklisting of noncooperative witnesses in their work in the film industry, and so this meeting involved that fact. For the studios, there were Eric Johnston, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, Maurice Benjamin, an attorney, and Paul McNutt, another attorney, who had been high commissioner of the Philippines. The producers' representatives-- I am now reading from Gordon Kahn's book, The Hollywood Ten [Hollywood on Trial], page 5:

The producers' representatives were shown copies of the memorandum filed by the attorneys for the Nineteen, in which the authority of the Un-American Activities Committee to issue subpoenas was challenged. "We are maintaining," said Kenny, "that the Thomas committee aims at censorship of the screen by intimidation.

I'll explain that, by this time, the chairman of the committee was [J.] Parnell Thomas.



This accusation is not merely rumor. There is ample reason for this in the public statements of its chairman. Mr. Johnston replied, "We share your feelings, gentlemen, and we support your position." Mr. Kenny then remarked, "The subject with which we are chiefly concerned is the character of the statements attributed to J. Parnell Thomas by the newspapers. He was quoted as saying that the producers had agreed to establish a blacklist throughout the motion picture industry." Indignantly, Eric Johnston answered, "That report is nonsense. As long as I live, I will never be a party to anything as un-American as a blacklist. And any statement purporting to quote me as agreeing to a blacklist is a libel upon me as a good American." Mr. Crum rose to shake Mr. Johnston's hand, saying, "Eric, I knew you were being misquoted. I'd never believe that you would go along with anything as vicious as a blacklist in a democracy." "Tell the boys not to worry," Johnston concluded, "There'll never be a blacklist. We're not going to go totalitarian to please this committee."

[laughter]

GARDNER: Famous last words, as the saying goes.

MALTZ: So we were given this good news on the eve of the hearings. It is relevant to mention that timed with the hearings, the Hearst newspapers throughout the nation started a carefully timed campaign for a federal police censorship of the motion picture industry. Quoting from Kahn again, on page 139:

Emblazoned on the front pages owned by Mr. Hearst was this message:

The need is for federal censorship of motion pictures. The Constitution permits it. The law sanctions it. The safety and welfare of America demands it.



GARDNER: A newspaperman coming out for censorship.

What a contradiction.

MALTZ: Oh, boy!

The hearings were held in the caucus room on the second floor of the old House Office Building. It was a very large room with seats perhaps for about 300 people. There was always a long line on the stairway leading up from the ground floor rotunda to the caucus room, with police in attendance to see that order was kept. The committee members sat behind a wide table in front of the seats, and there were newsreel cameras, all the radio networks, and TV cameras (although TV was then in its infancy), and there were ninety reporters in attendance.

The committee members present were always chairman J. Parnell Thomas, [John] McDowell of Pennsylvania, [Richard B.] Vail of Colorado, and a freshman Congressman, [Richard M.] Nixon of California, and most of the time, or part of the time, [John S.] Wood of Georgia. It's perhaps worth mentioning as a passing piece of comedy that chairman Thomas was a small, pudgy, red-faced man, and when he was seated on his chair, was too small to be caught by the television cameras, and so he sat on a cushion placed on top of a telephone book. [laughter]

GARDNER: I didn't realize that.

MALTZ: Yes. Rankin was never present. The chief





investigator was Robert E. Stripling. I'll be making mention of him after these hearings, once again, in the year 1953 or '54 when he was fired. He, like the other investigators, were all former FBI men, and it was very evident in the hearings that the committee got its data from the FBI. I might pause just to explain why. This committee had several investigators. It had money to do investigations.



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MALTZ: When the committee put the political dossiers of the various unfriendly witnesses into the record, there were items in it that went back to the early 1930s, years before the committee had been even created. Now, it was clear that the FBI had files that dated to that time and that it would have been an enormous work of duplication for the committee to try to get similar files, much more difficult, since papers were out of date and so on. And in view of the support that J. Edgar Hoover gave the committee, and the committee gave Hoover, in the presence of the former FBI men on the staff of the committee, it was not hard to feel confident that the origin of the files of the committee were in the files of the FBI.

The chairman, Parnell Thomas, opened the hearing with a statement of its purpose. I am reading now from page 1 of Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, Eightieth Congress, First Session, printed by the United States Government Printing Office, and it's entitled: Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry.

Thomas said:

Before this hearing gets under way, I would like to call attention to some of the basic principles by which the Committee on Un-American Activities is being guided in its investigation into alleged



subversive influence in America's motion picture industry . . . We all recognize, certainly, the tremendous effect which moving pictures have on their mass audiences, far removed from the Hollywood sets. We all recognize that what the citizen sees and hears in his neighborhood movie house carries a powerful impact on his thoughts and behavior. With such vast influence over the lives of American citizens as the motion picture industry exerts, it is not unnatural--in fact, it is very logical--that subversive and undemocratic forces should attempt to use this medium for un-American purposes.

Now, clearly, then, the hearings were to be an inquiry into the use of the film medium by Communists for subversive purposes. But, on page 3, he was already shifting the purpose of the hearings somewhat, because he said: "The question before this committee, therefore, and the scope of its present inquiry, will be to determine the extent of communist infiltration in the Hollywood motion picture industry. We want to know what strategic positions in the industry have been captured by these elements, whose loyalty is pledged in word and deed to the interests of a foreign power."

Now, there's a distinction between saying that there were Communists working in the industry, and finding out what positions they hold, from saying that they were influencing the product which people saw in their movie houses. In a way, it was a shift; in another way, what he was doing was linking the two. That is to say, he was trying to establish the position that, if he could find



Communists in the motion picture industry, then, ipso facto, they must be influencing the content of the motion pictures. And as would be seen in the course of the hearings, this would be done without ever referring to any except three wartime pro-Soviet motion pictures, but not to others. Now, I am taking for granted, of course, that any scholar interested in looking at my oral history would read the materials of the hearing themselves, but there are certain things that I want to point out about them.

In the first week of the friendly witnesses, Jack Warner was the first important witness, as head of Warner Brothers films. He was on the spot with the committee, because his studio had produced Mission to Moscow, which the committee considered to be outrageous Red propaganda. So he was out to prove--and this he had done, of course, in wartime, when Russia was our ally--that he was an American patriot who never had allowed anything in his movies that was communist. And that, indeed, he was such a diligent bloodhound in watching out for Communist efforts to inject propaganda into Warner Brothers films that he had, in fact, fired an entire slew of Communist writers. And he named them. They were Alvah Bessie, Gordon Kahn, Guy Endore, Howard Koch (one of the authors of Casablanca), Ring Lardner, Jr., John Howard Lawson, myself, Robert Rossen, Irwin Shaw, Dalton Trumbo, John Wexley.





All of this was to substantiate the committee's charge that Communist propagandists were slipping propaganda into films. And he said that he had fired us because we had tried to put Communist propaganda into films, or he had found out that we were Communists and he wouldn't have Communists on his payroll.

One of the biggest regrets of my life is that I didn't jump up in the hearing room at that time and shout out that he was a perjurer. Because I could easily have proven that he was, inasmuch as, ever since I had last worked at Warner Brothers, on, I guess, Cloak and Dagger--or ever since I had finished with Pride of the Marines--they had not only offered me a contract, but they had called my agent about every two weeks since, and, in fact, two weeks before I went to the hearing, there had been a call to her to ask if I would take a film job. So that it would have been very easy to prove that he never fired me.

Howard Koch had insisted upon getting out of his Warner Brothers contract after the violent behavior of Warner Brothers police against strikers in front of the studio--back-lot strikers. And I have not been able to ascertain whether it was Koch himself who paid Warner Brothers \$10,000 to get out of a contract, or whether it was [Samuel] Goldwyn who paid Warner Brothers \$25,000 to take over Koch's contract, but there was clear evidence



by canceled check that Koch had not been fired. And the same was true of all of the other people. This was a list that Warner had been supplied by the committee when he was in secret executive session with them during the previous summer, and he was brazen enough to come out with this piece of perjury.

Now, the reason why I didn't jump up and yell that he was a perjurer was that the Nineteen had decided upon a policy which--it had still not ended--was that we agreed that we would not attack the producers; we would attack the committee only, because the First Amendment committee was still at work, and we hoped that we would still bring the producers into open opposition against the committee. Well, that was a sensible policy, and maybe I myself was in error in not seeing that we could maintain that policy while taking a different position with an individual executive who was indeed on the side of the committee. In any instance, I felt bound, whether rightly or wrongly, by that policy decision, and so I didn't say anything. I have really never ceased regretting it, because it would have been a sensational thing to do in the most useful sense. I would have been thrown out of the hearing room, the reporters would have crowded around me, and I could have proved that he was a perjurer.

GARDNER: Right at the beginning of the hearing.



MALTZ: Right from the first witness. Now, Warner's testimony was an example of the outrageous unfairness of these hearings, because we were not allowed to cross-examine him, or any other witnesses, and also we could not sue them, legally, because testimony given on the stand is privileged and not open to libel suits. And when we got on the stand in our turn, we weren't allowed by the chairman to discuss the testimony that anyone had given against us. There is the question of why we didn't call a press conference, say, every afternoon after the hearings were over, to discuss the given testimony, and the reason for that was twofold. On the whole, what was going on in the press was good, because the press in general was very critical--not the Hearst press--but the press in general was very critical of the way these hearings were conducted. And, in that sense, we were getting a good press, so that we didn't want to rock the boat. But secondly, we felt that if we called a press conference, there were bound to be some reporters who would just keep insisting on asking whether we were members of the Communist party, and that that would be so disruptive that we would not be able to get across anything else we wanted to do. And certainly that's what the Hearst reporters there would do; we couldn't keep them out.

Now, Warner also made, in his testimony, a specific reference to my film Pride of the Marines. And he was asked to identify the films that those writers he had fired



had worked on, and when he came to my name, and stated "Maltz in Pride of the Marines," the chairman, at this point, asked, "Did Maltz get much into Pride of the Marines?" "No," said Warner, "but he tried." And he said that he ran the film himself, and he detected "one little thing where the fellow on the train says, 'My name isn't Jones, so I can't get a job.'" This isn't an accurate quote from what was said in the film, but that's the way Warner put it. And Warner went on to say, "It was this kid named Diamond, a Jewish boy, in the Marines, a hero at Guadalcanal." Warner said that there might have been something there, but if there was, he didn't really recognize it. And he said, "Some of these lines have innuendos and double meanings and things like that, and you have to take eight or ten Harvard law courses to find out what they mean."

Mr. Stripling: They are very subtle.

Mr. Warner: Exceedingly so.

Now, on the one hand, it's so dirty on his part, and on the other hand, it's so ridiculous. I made mention in discussing the preview of Pride of the Marines that Warner stood beside me in the urinal and told me how pleased he was by this particular scene in the film. And it is this very scene that he picks out to say, out of one side of his mouth, that that was my attempt to get some Communist propaganda into it, and on the other hand to say quickly out of the other side of his mouth, however, he





didn't think there was anything there because it was so subtle that you have to take eight or ten Harvard law courses to find out what they mean. And the chief investigator, Stripling, plays along with him, and they do this strange charade to both confirm and deny that there was propaganda that I put into a film. A little later in the testimony, they were talking about Action in the North Atlantic, a Warner Brothers film that John Howard Lawson had written, and Warner says, "Naturally, John Howard Lawson tried to swing a lot of things in there, but to my knowledge there wasn't anything."

Mr. Stripling: John Howard Lawson tried to put stuff in?  
Mr. Warner: Yes, I would say he did in one form or another.

But they don't go on to say what. And this is a congressional committee. The highest body of our land. [laughter] Of course, J. Parnell Thomas, perhaps one might say, had not had much training in investigative techniques. He had been previously a stockbroker and an insurance man. Now, these statements by Warner, however, bore directly on the charge that Communists were sneaking Communist party propaganda into films, and it's perhaps at this point relevant to mention exactly what does happen with a film script.

Any film script that is made into a film had to be read at that time by the producer, who worked with a writer, and by the secretary or secretaries who typed it;



and if the producer felt satisfied with it, it then had to go up to the executives. And there it was read by a number of executives before it was produced--for instance, in Warner Brothers, at least by Warner's important assistant Steve Trilling, and if it was to be an expensive film, presumably by Jack Warner himself. And then a director was called in, and the producer called in also an art director and hired a cameraman, and copies of the script went to the various backstage departments, to the costumer, and to the set people, and to the casting director. And then as it approached production, scripts went to the actors who were called in on it, and certainly as it was in production, the dialogue was heard by everyone on the set, let's say twenty or thirty or forty grips of various sorts. So we have at least 100, let's say, 100 percent pure Americans who have pored over or listened to this script on its way to production. And after each day's shooting, it is looked at by the director and the producer and the executives of the studio, and in spite of this fine-tooth examination, the assertion is made by the committee that Communist propaganda is being put into films, and nobody sees it because it's so subtle, and yet it has a powerful influence on the American people.

Now, this, of course, is Alice in Wonderland absurdity, but one has to ask why there were not investigative reporters, such as the ones who investigated Watergate, who found out



facts like this which were not at all secret. No Deep Throat was needed to reveal what happened to a film script in Hollywood. And indeed, in his testimony, Louis B. Mayer, who followed Warner to the stand, made a general reference to the fact that "our scripts are read and reread by so many of the executive force, producers, and editors, that if you looked carefully at 1,200 to 1,500 pictures I produced with my people out at the studio, you would be surprised how little you could possibly point to, even now, when we are on the lookout for it." But the press never picked up on it to say, "This is nonsense." And this was of the temper of the time, that this should have been said.

Now, there was a further absurd charge that came into the hearings in the testimony of a well-known director, Sam Wood, which was that Communists in the industry were carrying on a blacklist against non-Communists. Here's the testimony [p.59]:

MR. STRIPLING: Now, Mr. Wood, would you give the committee some of these examples in which the Communists have exerted influence in the motion picture industry? In other words, how do they go about it? What are the mechanics of it?

MR. WOOD: . . . For instance, a man gets a key position in the studio and has charge of the writers. When you, as a director or a producer, are ready for a writer you ask for a list and this man shows you a list. Well, if he is following the party line his pets are on top or the other people aren't on it at all. If there is a particular man in there who has been opposing them they will leave his name off the list. Then if that man isn't employed





for about two months, they will go to the head of the studio and say, "Nobody wants this man." The head is perfectly honest about it and says, "Nobody wants to use him, let him go." So a good American is let out. But it doesn't stop there. They point that out as an example and say, "You better fall in line, play ball, or else." And they go down the line on it.

MR. STRIPLING: That is true in the case of writers. Would you say it is true in any other branch of the industry?

MR. WOOD: I don't think, in any part of the business, they will use a party who is opposed to their ideas, if they can avoid it, and they can usually avoid it.

MR. STRIPLING: They operate as cliques, in other words?

MR. WOOD: Oh, yes, they have their meetings every night. They are together; they work for one purpose.

And that's the end of his testimony on that. Well, this is something that, again, any investigative reporter would have found out is absurd, because, in fact, there were no Communists in any key positions in the industry in a position to do something like this--aside from the fact of whether or not they would have wanted to, or could get away with it if they tried it. But they weren't in hiring positions. Furthermore, directors don't live in limbo: they know who the good writers are. They know who writers are whom they want. And, finally, to say as he did that if a writer hasn't been working for two months the studio will not want him is, again, Alice in Wonderland nonsense. So, we have here something that





I think was created in the back rooms of the committee as a kind of fiction story to say, "Let's add this onto it, this will sound good." And they put it in.

Wood also testified that Communists, or alleged Communists, had tried to take over the [Screen] Directors Guild. Now, I'm sure that the Communists, or the progressives in the Guild, may have advocated some policies that Sam Wood was opposed to. But just how this contributed to the corruption of the 85 million moviegoers each week was never explained. Wood went on to explain why he had been one of the organizers of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals. He said, "Well, the reason was very simple. We organized in self-defense. We felt that there was a definite effort by the Communist party members, or party travelers, to take over the unions and the guilds of Hollywood, and if they had the unions and the guilds controlled, they would have the plum in their lap, and they would move on to use it for Communist propaganda." Well, the plum, of course, here, obviously stands for the film industry. This is another piece of Alice in Wonderland, because if you had all of the guilds and unions headed by the Communists, they still wouldn't be buying a given novel to do in a film studio, and the decisions on what would be done and what would not be done were all in the hands of the executives who owned the studios.



Now, Mr. Nixon, our future president, made his contribution in these hearings in the following way. He said, with Wood on the stand, "So far as this group is concerned" (this group being the Communists), "it is 'thought control' whenever the motion picture industry might make an anti-Communist film; but it isn't 'thought control' if they were to make an antifascist or an anti-Nazi film? In other words, they welcome the first but oppose the latter?"

MR. WOOD: If you would read the review of that meeting of the "thought conference" held at Beverly Hills Hotel [Conference on Thought Control] you would know exactly what was in their mind. It is only one thing. It is not America. As far as investigation is concerned, we would welcome an investigation. [Maltz: He means, "We, the Motion Picture Alliance."] Our books are open to you at any time.

MR. NIXON: You have indicated that the main success of those who follow the Communist line in Hollywood has not been in what they have been able to get into pictures but what they have been able to get out?

MR. WOOD: I think they are both dangerous, but I think what they keep out is doubly dangerous. You wouldn't notice that. If the script is accepted, you don't check back. I do. I generally go back over the book and try to check to see if anything important was left out. But if they don't check back, they leave things out that puts this country and our way of living in a favorable light.

And I merely note that no reference was made to any specific film.



At the end of Wood's testimony, a comedy routine was played out by the chairman that was standard for the friendly witnesses. Wood was congratulated for his courage in appearing before the committee and damning Communists in films. "In other words," said the chairman, "you've got guts." Just how and why it took such courage [laughter] in 1947 to go to Washington and say, "I hate Communists," I don't know.

Louis B. Mayer, head of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the second important friendly witness, took a different position from Warner. He said that he hadn't fired any Communists, because no Red propaganda had been slipped into any of his films. However, he acknowledged that several writers under contract--Trumbo, Cole, Donald Ogden Stewart--had been called Communists. When pressured, he agreed that he wouldn't have any of them on his payroll, if it became clear that they advocated the overthrow of our government. And it was this that the committee wanted to get out of him. There was then a carefully prepared piece of dialogue between the committee and Mayer, and between the committee and other friendly witnesses at this point, and it's best exemplified by dialogue between Stripling and Adolphe Menjou, who was soon to take the stand. [tape recorder turned off] I misspoke myself a little bit, just before we stopped. I want to go back. When pressured,



Louis Mayer agreed that he wouldn't have any of the men who had been called Communists on his payroll if it became clear that they advocated the overthrow of the government. And it was this that the committee wanted to get out of him.

Now, another point: the carefully prepared dishonest dialogue between the committee and friendly witnesses is well illustrated by this exchange between Stripling and Adolphe Menjou, the actor.

MR. STRIPLING: As an actor, Mr. Menjou, could you tell the committee whether or not an actor in a picture could portray a scene which would in effect serve as propaganda for communism or any other un-American purpose?

MR. MENJOU: Oh, yes. I believe that under certain circumstances a communistic director, a communistic writer, or a communistic actor, even if he were under orders from the head of the studio not to inject communism or un-Americanism or subversion into pictures, could easily subvert that order, under the proper circumstances, by a look, by an inflection, by a change in the voice. I think it could be easily done. I have never seen it done, but I think it could be done.

MR. STRIPLING: You don't know of any examples?

MR. MENJOU: I cannot think of one at the moment. No sir.

Now, this is just incredible! [laughter]

GARDNER: Alice in Wonderland is really the most apt description.

MALTZ: Incredible! But just think, you have ninety reporters!





GARDNER: One wonders, you're right. Certainly journals such as the Nation must have picked up and had the material, and yet there really wasn't anything major that I can recall in the reading that I did in the press of the Left in research in different places--

MALTZ: I think--

GARDNER: --until later, until the fifties.

MALTZ: Well, even in the fifties-- You see, I have on my shelf books on the hearings and all that touch upon and deal with them, and they deal in a generalized way. They don't go into examining this kind of--

GARDNER: Right!

MALTZ: --this kind of analysis of the points. And that's why I'm doing it here, and that's what has failed to be done.

GARDNER: But it is surprising that even the left-liberal magazines didn't go into greater detail.

MALTZ: Well, one would have to come back to the time; it may well be that they picked out certain things. But their space is limited, and so--

GARDNER: And their readership was definitely limited at that time.

MALTZ: Well, the same readership I think they have now.

GARDNER: Perhaps.

MALTZ: I don't think it's grown--



GARDNER: It goes up and down.

MALTZ: There was testimony from John Charles Moffitt, who was a screenwriter and a journalist and a film critic. He'd had quite some years of being a critic. He also had some prepared dialogue that was extremely artificial and vulgar, and again I note that none of the books I have read that touch on the hearings have mentioned it, and the question is: "Why not?" and, "Why didn't allegedly serious scholars of the period pick up items like this?"

MR. MOFFITT: . . . I had several conversations with Mr. Biberman, Mr. Lawson, and others of that organization.

During the course of it, Mr. Lawson made this significant statement: He said:

As a writer, do not try to write an entire communist picture . . . The producers will quickly identify it and it will be killed by the front office . . . As a writer try to get five minutes of the Communist doctrine, five minutes of the party line in every script you write . . . Get that into an expensive scene, a scene involving expensive stars, large sets or many extras, because . . . then even if it is discovered by the front office, the business manager of the unit, the very watchdog of the treasury, the very servant of capitalism, in order to keep the budget from going too high, will resist the elimination of that scene. If you can make the message come from the mouth of Gary Cooper or some other important star who is unaware of what he is saying, by the time it is discovered, he is in New York, and a great deal of expense



will be involved to bring him back and reshoot the scene.

If you get the message into a scene employing many extras it will be very expensive to reshoot that scene because of the number of extras involved or the amount of labor that would be necessary to light and reconstruct a large set.

Said Moffitt, concluding, "That was the nucleus of what he said at that time."

Now, since I went in earlier and described how many people had to read a script, this thing is incredibly, not only phony, but it's so stupidly phony. But I have seen this quoted again and again by people who were procommittee as an example of serious testimony right from the mouth of John Howard Lawson. Similarly, Mr. Moffitt said [Hearings, p. 121]:

I think that the most infamous aspect of Lawson's technique is that of involving innocent people. I think that many a time that actor plays that five minutes without knowing the significance of what he is doing. I think on many occasions-- I think on practically every occasion that I know of, the producer, both the associate producer and the studio heads, was in complete ignorance of what was done. I think, very often, the director may not know. Now, this is done occasionally in pictures involving budgets of one-and-a-half or two-million dollars. That gets into the picture, and if I name that picture I will be working a hardship on innocent people. I would very much prefer, with your permission, to name those pictures in executive session.



Here you have the director, the executives, and they all don't know that that five minutes is in the script. [laughter] But he doesn't want to name any pictures; he's going to whisper it in executive session. You know, this nightmare of incredible statements.

Rupert Hughes, a writer, testified that the reason anti-Communist films weren't made (which was another of the committee's questions) was because producers had been told that Communists would destroy the upholstery and put stink bombs in any theater that played them. The fact that dozens of anti-Communist films were exhibited in subsequent years without damage to upholstery or stink bombs in the theaters has gone unnoticed.

The committee was constantly pushing the policy of a blacklist in a very open way with the friendly witnesses. But it found resistance on two grounds. Some said they didn't think employment should be conditioned by a writer's politics, and others were afraid that depriving a person of his right to work would come into the area of conspiracy, of felony. So that by the time James McGuinness, an MGM executive, came to the stand, the committee had formulated a way of getting around both objections. Here is Congressman Wood of the committee. I'm referring to the Hearings, page 150:

MR. WOOD: Wouldn't it be very simple, in your opinion, Mr. McGuinness, if the Congress would simply by a mandatory legislation provide that





the controlling heads of any industry may, if they have reasonable grounds to conclude that a man is engaged in activities detrimental to this Government, and aiding a philosophy that is designed to overthrow it, would have the right to eliminate them and that other people in that industry would have the right to decline to employ them for that reason, without fear of future legal implications?

MR. MCGUINNESS: I agree to that in principle, Mr. Wood.

And then, Mr. Nixon, our future president, summed up another aspect of the testimony of McGuinness in the following way [Hearings, p.151]:

MR. NIXON: In other words, the situation at the present time is that those who are following the Communist line as writers in Hollywood are under direction to distort the facts about America and to suppress the facts about totalitarian communism?

MR. MCGUINNESS: I believe that to be true.

[tape recorder turned off]

However, neither Nixon nor any other member of the committee saw fit to ask McGuinness to name one film in which distortion occurred at the present time. I'm separating out other films from the three that the committee attacked: Mission to Moscow, Soul of Russia, and North Star were the three films made about the Soviet Union during the war. And then came some stars. Robert Taylor played footsie with the committee, and was congratulated on his patriotism for being such an honest witness, even though he would suffer Communist criticism for it and might be hurt at the



box office. Howard Rushmore, a former film critic of the Daily Worker testified that I was one of the writers sent out by the Communist party in New York to Hollywood. He specifically stated that I and others did not go on our own. He also stated that before any manuscript could be sent to a publisher by a Communist party member, it had to be submitted to his cultural commission for approval. Of course, no cross-examination was ever allowed.

The actors Robert Montgomery, George Murphy, Ronald Reagan, and Gary Cooper were presented in succession, because in addition to being glamorous stars, their expert advice was needed on the constitutionality of a law making the Communist party illegal. The level of intelligence and probity in these hearings reached a triumphant peak in the following statements by Mrs. Lela Rogers (the mother of Ginger Rogers, the actress) and Congressman McDowell of Pennsylvania. Now, I'm going to read from page 236 of the Hearings:

MRS. [LELA] ROGERS: Remember, Communists are in control of many of the schools, your clubs, your study clubs, even the little women's clubs, where women come to read books to them and explain plays to them. Communists have their cohorts that do the reading and choosing of the books--and the leftist book always got by beautifully. It has been a long time since we have had the feeling that we have a clear school, that our children are being taught about America. I think that when we show the people America, as against the face of this thing, we have just about licked it.



THE CHAIRMAN: Well, can't the moving-picture industry aid in that to a great extent?

MRS. ROGERS: Oh, immeasurably, but it has been a long time since you could get a good American story bought in the motion picture industry.

Aside from the marvelous patriotism she displays, and her clear understanding of what's going on in the United States, the clarity of her thoughts and the way she expresses them are also to be admired. [laughter]

Most of the friendly witnesses were asked to give testimony about the effort of the Communists to take over the unions in the film industry, particularly the Screen Writers Guild, and it was constantly asserted that if these efforts were successful, the Communists would then control the industry itself and the content of films. And I've already commented on the absurdity of this. The hearings had made national headlines, and of course the presence of the film stars augmented this, and that was why they had been summoned. There was strong press criticism of the hearings at this point, and there had been during the week. I'm now reading from Report on Blacklisting by John Cogley, published by the Fund for the Republic:

After two days of the hearings, the New York Herald commented that the testimony so far had "produced exactly what was expected of them." Mr. Thomas's labor, the paper declared,



had brought forth "an abundance of unsubstantiated charges, some dizzying, new definitions of communism, and a satisfactory collection of clippings for the Congressman's own scrapbook." The editorial asserted that the beliefs of men and women who write for the screen are like the beliefs of any ordinary men and women, and nobody's business but their own, as the Bill of Rights mentions.

That was certainly a good statement, but, as I look back and compare the activities of the press around Watergate with its activities at the time of the hearings, I feel that the press should have been much more engaged than it was in combating what the committee did. And of course, in succeeding years, it became less and less critical until it ceased criticism altogether.

In the testimony the friendly witnesses took up the entire first week of the hearings, and in the second week came the testimony of John Howard Lawson as the first of the Ten. Before he came to the stand, our attorneys, Kenny and Crum, made two vain attempts to attack the committee legally. For instance, here was one of them, and I'm reading from page 289 of the Hearings:

MR. CRUM: May I request the right of cross-examination? I ask you to bring back and permit us to cross-examine the witnesses Adolphe Menjou, Fred Niblo, John Charles Moffitt, Richard Macauley, Rupert Hughes, Sam Wood, Ayn Rand, James McGuinness--

THE CHAIRMAN: The request--

MR. CRUM: Howard Rushmore--





(The chairman pounding gavel.)

MR. CRUM: Morrie Ryskind, Oliver Carlson--

THE CHAIRMAN: The request is denied.

MR. CRUM: In order to show that these witnesses lied.

THE CHAIRMAN: That request is denied. Mr. Stripling, the first witness.

MR. STRIPLING: John Howard Lawson.

And Lawson was brought to the stand.



TAPE NUMBER: XVII, SIDE TWO

NOVEMBER 29, 1978

MALTZ: Contrary to the practice in the first week with the friendly witnesses, here was the dialogue about Lawson's request to read a statement, page 290 of the Hearings:

MR. LAWSON: Mr. Chairman, I have a statement here which I wish to make--

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, all right; let me see your statement. (statement handed to the chairman)  
. . . I don't care to read any more of the statement. The statement will not be read. I read the first line.

MR. LAWSON: You have spent one week vilifying me before the American public--

THE CHAIRMAN: Just a minute--

MR. LAWSON: And you refuse to allow me to make a statement on my rights as an American citizen.

THE CHAIRMAN: I refuse you to make the statement, because of the first sentence in your statement. That statement is not pertinent to the inquiry.

Now, this is a congressional committee--a congressional committee set up by law. We must have orderly procedure, and we are going to have orderly procedure. Mr. Stripling, identify the witness.

MR. LAWSON: The rights of American citizens are important in this room here, and I intend to stand up for those rights, Congressman Thomas.

MR. STRIPLING: Mr. Lawson, will you state your full name, please?

MR. LAWSON: I wish to protest against the unwillingness of this committee to read a statement,



when you permitted Mr. Warner, Mr. Mayer, and others to read statements in this room.

My name is John Howard Lawson.

It soon became very clear that the committee was determined to limit the unfriendly witnesses if it could to a yes or no answer to two questions: "Are you a member of the writers' guild or actors' or directors' guild or producers' guild?" and "Are you a member of the Communist party?" Now, the Nineteen had made a decision to try and break through any attempts of the committee to shut us up. And with the very first witness, it was clear that they intended to do so. And this was the background for Lawson's very vigorous efforts to be heard. Many who have written about the hearings, like Eric Bentley, have been extremely critical of the fact that Lawson shouted, as indeed he did, and he had a strong voice. To me, this is an utterly superficial reaction. I think they should have cheered his refusal to be muzzled. When you have a situation where those friendly to the committee have been permitted to talk at random for as long as they wish, and then you find yourself unable to say anything about the lies that have been spouted about you, this is so manifestly unfair that to accept it meekly would be silly. And I think it's just amazing that people should have been critical of Lawson's behavior.



Now, as a matter of fact, there's every reason to believe that the committee knew beforehand how each member of the Ten would testify, because I know that I and others had our telephones bugged from the time we got our subpoenas. Things suddenly began to happen to my phone. I'd pick it up to dial and I would hear a click, and sometimes when I was waiting for something, I would hear some voices whispering at the other end. I believe that at that time the technique of bugging was not as subtle as it probably is now, or the people doing it were careless. I'm sure that our meeting room in the Shoreham was bugged, and I would assume that every telephone in every bedroom occupied by the unfriendly witnesses was bugged. Furthermore, I think that most, if not all, of the sessions between each individual and his attorney was bugged. For instance, when I had my private session with Ben Margolis about the way I would testify and we discussed it, we did so out in a large garden area of the hotel, of the Shoreham Hotel. When we sat down, a man strolled over to a bench that was out of hearing of where we were, and he sat down to read a newspaper and put a small portfolio down next to the bench. I didn't know at that time, nor did Ben, as we discovered later, that it was perfectly possible to have a tape recorder at that distance from where we were and to catch everything that we said.





And there were incidents of finding people in telephone booths who were listening to a conversation being carried on and so on. So I do believe that the chairman was prepared in advance to gavel Lawson into silence. And Lawson had no recourse except to continue talking and to raise his voice above the hammering, which was very loud, if he was to be heard.

Now, a very important legal maneuver came into play in responses given by Lawson and others. And that was a phrase, "It is a matter of public record." On page 292, for instance:

MR. STRIPLING: Mr. Lawson, I repeat the question: Have you ever held any position in the Screen Writers Guild?

MR. LAWSON: I have stated that the question is illegal. But it is a matter of public record that I have held many offices in the Screen Writers Guild. I was its first president, in 1933, and I have held office on the board of directors of the Screen Writers Guild at other times.

Now, our lawyers had pointed out to us that where things were a matter of public record, it was perfectly all right to state that, but it had to be prefaced by the fact that you were not answering the question itself.

GARDNER: But citing the public record.

MALTZ: You were merely citing the public record while saying the question is illegal. And that was attached to something else that was not easily understood, in fact,



that was confusing to people, and it's best illustrated from Trumbo's testimony [Hearings, p.332].

MR. STRIPLING: Are you a member of the Screen Writers Guild?

MR. TRUMBO: Mr. Stripling, the rights of American labor to inviolably secret membership lists have been won in this country by a great cost of blood and a great cost in terms of hunger. These rights have become an American tradition. Over the Voice of America we have broadcast to the entire world the freedom of our labor.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are you answering the question or are you making another speech?

MR. TRUMBO: Sir, I am truly answering the question.

Now, we all of us used the phrase, "I am answering the question," even though we did not answer yes or no as the committee wanted. And the reason why was the following. We could have answered, "Your question is illegal and I just won't answer it," but we didn't do that because our attorneys felt that the Supreme Court might sustain a contempt citation if we merely said, "I won't answer the question." And for this reason, we were all individually advised to insist that we were being responsive to the committee, but we had to answer in our own way.

Now, it turned out that the public effect of this position was bad. It created confusion because we couldn't explain to the public why we weren't answering yes or no. And I've already said why, as Communists, we wouldn't say no,



and why we wouldn't say yes, because that would give the committee the legal right to ask us who others we knew who were Communists. And, on top of that, our saying "I have answered the question" was a very confusing thing. [tape recorder turned off] For instance, the reaction of the Committee for the First Amendment illustrates this. I am now reading from Cogley in his Report on Blacklisting, page 7.

The Committee decided to send a delegation to Washington to watch the hearings, to "see whether they would be fair."

(And, incidentally, to take some of the newspaper play away from Parnell Thomas and the big-name Hollywood personalities he had summoned as "friendly" witnesses.)

The group also decided to make coast-to-coast radio broadcasts at which stars would discuss the Constitution and civil liberties.

I might say, interrupting the quote from Cogley, that two nationwide radio broadcasts were made by the Committee for the First Amendment with very prominent people making superb statements about the hearings. And it was a committee of very prominent actors, led by Humphrey Bogart and his wife [Lauren Bacall], and Danny Kaye, and others who came to the hearings. Back to Cogley:

After the Hollywood delegation, in a blaze of publicity, took their places in the hearing room



the chairman called John Howard Lawson. . . . His behavior on the stand came as an enormous shock to most of the Hollywood visitors. None of them expected him to "cooperate" but they were not prepared for shouting and unabashed insolence. A press conference was held that same afternoon, attended by dozens of newspapermen. At the conference, the Hollywood delegation was hopelessly demoralized when newsmen suggested that their appearance in Washington would be interpreted all over the country as support for Lawson. The next day, after two more unfriendly witnesses were called, the group left Washington. Many of them were utterly disappointed and angry. "We've been had!" they told each other.

[tape recorder turned off]

GARDNER: What's interesting about that, and vaguely contradictory, is that according to the Fund for the Republic report, the Hollywood people, the Committee for the First Amendment, and so on, went home abashed after the hearings of the twenty-seventh.

MALTZ: Yes.

GARDNER: And yet the second broadcast was November 2, which means that even after they had gone back to Hollywood abashed, according to the report, Norman Corwin still was able to put together a broadcast. It's just a strange contradiction that comes out in my research and yours. I don't know what the answer to that is.

MALTZ: Maybe there isn't really a contradiction. They were dismayed by the conduct of Lawson and by the two other men, who would have been Trumbo and myself. And





it started the decay of the committee, and yet, if the broadcast had been paid for, they would say, "Well, we're still against the committee, so let's reiterate our position against the committee." Actually, those broadcasts--I should have given a little more time to them. For instance, Thomas Mann said:

I have the honor to expose myself as a hostile witness. I testify that I am very much interested in the moving-picture industry, and that, since my arrival in the United States nine years ago, I've seen a great many Hollywood films. If Communist propaganda had been smuggled into any of them, it must have been most thoroughly hidden. I, for one, never noticed anything of the sort. I testify, moreover, that to my mind the ignorant and superstitious persecution of the believers in a political and economic doctrine--which is, after all, the creation of great minds and great thinkers--I testify that this persecution is not only degrading for the persecutors themselves, but also very harmful to the cultural reputation of this country. As an American citizen of German birth, I finally testify that I am painfully familiar with certain political trends: spiritual intolerance, political inquisitions, and declining legal security, and all this in the name of an alleged state of emergency. That is how it started in Germany. What followed was fascism; what followed fascism was war.

Marvelous, a marvelous statement. The list of people who were on the broadcast, just reading down: Judy Garland, George Kaufman, Fredric March, Gregory Peck, Bennett Cerf, Lucille Ball, Burt Lancaster, Robert Ryan, John Garfield, Myrna Loy, Frank Sinatra, Edward G. Robinson, and Archibald MacLeish and so on. I think I'll mention in



passing--I'll quote MacLeish, because I want to make a statement. MacLeish said this: "No issue was ever clearer than the issue of the Thomas Committee as tossed into the faces of the American people. The most American of all American rights is the right of any man to think as he pleases and to say what he thinks. That right is protected against congressional interference by the American Constitution. The question before the country is, Can a committee of Congress go indirectly by inquisition into a man's beliefs, what the Constitution forbids Congress to do directly? And, if it can, what is left of the Constitution and the freedom it protects?"

Now, that's a marvelous statement, but in the two and a half years that we were fighting our case after we were held in contempt, I don't remember that Archibald MacLeish ever came forward. He certainly never sent \$5.00 to our committee, and I never heard any protest from him. And this, I'm afraid, was true of everyone else in his position.

GARDNER: When you say "in his position," what do you mean?

MALTZ: Well, what I mean is--I'm going to come to this later--no leading American people in the literary field came out in defense of the Ten. They were all silent.

Going back to the testimony that Lawson gave and others of us gave, in later years I decided personally



that it would have been equal legally, and much more wise in terms of our public position, to stand on a platform of simply refusing to answer the question because it was illegal, and not to say, "But I am answering the question." When I discussed this with Ben Margolis, he pointed out accurately that we were one of the first cases, and that the attorneys were trying to work out the best way to have us both challenge the committee constitutionally and at the same time stay out of jail if that was possible. And that's a perfectly sound comment.

There's a very fascinating little footnote about Brecht that I was told about; I didn't witness this. After Lawson's testimony, and after he had been held in contempt, the other members of the Ten came back to the hotel. And since Lawson had been held in contempt, no one was feeling very happy about that, although it had been generally expected, and they found Brecht all smiles. He had been watching on TV. And he said, "There's not going to be fascism in America, because nothing like this ever happened in Germany. If something like this had happened in Germany, there wouldn't have been fascism in Germany." What he meant was the mobilization of a group of intellectuals to fight in this way.

I was the third one called--Dalton Trumbo was the second of our group--and it happened to be my thirty-ninth



birthday. When I asked for the right to read a statement, the chairman, Parnell Thomas, asked for a copy of it, and he looked at it for about two minutes in silence, and to my absolute astonishment said, "You may read it." I feel quite sure that the reason he permitted it was a decision during lunchtime by the committee that they were having so much newspaper criticism about the manifest unfairness of not allowing any of us to read statements that they'd come to this decision, and I was the next one up. After me, they allowed Alvah Bessie to read a portion of his statement, not all of it, and then they didn't allow any of the others to read theirs. And my statement is in The Citizen Writer, a pamphlet of speeches I published, and I can just give that to you as an adjunct--

GARDNER: Okay.

MALTZ: --to [the interview], I guess.\* Later in my testimony I handled myself awkwardly, I believe, because in a private conversation with Margolis in our legal session, he had urged me not to pause too long to answer questions, because radio listeners would be waiting, and it wouldn't sound right if I took too much time. Whatever the effect of the advice on others, it was not good for me, because it made me too tense in the desire to answer immediately, and I don't believe I answered well. As I

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\* See supporting documents.





was taken off the stand, I said something which has been referred to since by one or another writer, and the wonder has been done as to whether or not this was accident on my part, an accidental slip of the tongue, or whether it was purposeful. It was, indeed, purposeful. At the end, Stripling said, "I repeat the question. Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist party?" And I answered, "I have answered the question, Mr. Quisling. I am sorry. I want you to know--" Now, that was deliberate. I felt that Stripling was a quisling. And there was a very interesting aftermath some years later. It turned out that, around the time Edward G. Robinson was called to the stand, which would have been in 1952 or 1953, at that time, or a little later, he loaned Stripling \$10,000 and Stripling never paid the money back. And when this was discovered, Stripling was fired from the committee. Now, unfortunately I lost a scrapbook on transferring from Mexico up here, and so I can't cite the newspaper date, but I know that I had it and clipped it, and that Stripling was fired.

The last of the Nineteen to be called was Ring Lardner, and that made ten of us. Although Bertolt Brecht testified after Lardner, as a foreigner he didn't combat the committee, and he was not held in contempt.

GARDNER: Why were the others not called? Or were you--?

MALTZ: At this point, even though the chairman had promised



important revelations about espionage, the hearings were abruptly called off, and there seems no doubt that it was because of the bad press that the committee had been getting. The testimony of Dore Schary before that of Lardner was of great importance, because he was the head of production of RKO. And he insisted that he would not refuse to hire anyone because of his politics; he would only fire someone if it was proven that he was a foreign agent, dedicated to the overthrow of the government by force and violence. And we will come to that a little later.

There was a final statement by Parnell Thomas in which he said that the committee had a special staff studying Communist propaganda in motion pictures. The committee, he said--that is, the whole committee--would resume hearings on that matter in the near future. And it not only did not resume hearings in the near future, but it never took up the topic, and the special staff never made a public report on Communist propaganda in motion pictures. And that, too, is something which I didn't see the press pointing out. He asserted that the adjournment was only temporary, and that hearings would be resumed as soon as possible. In fact, there were no further hearings in the film industry for two and a half years, not until the Hollywood Ten lost its case and then went to jail.



It's at this point very relevant to state that all during these hearings, this patriotic chairman of this patriotic committee was committing a felony. He had forced his secretary into giving him kickbacks on her salary, and when this was exposed by a newspaper columnist and he was brought to trial, he pleaded nolo contendere and went to jail before we did.

Directly after the hearings were over, I was asked if I would go on a short speaking tour with Henry Wallace, who was then a very, very controversial public figure because he had left the Truman administration and was campaigning against Truman's foreign policy. And I joined his group in Pittsburgh and participated in one-night public meetings there and in Cincinnati and in Cleveland, and then I left and went home. One of the men with Wallace on that speaking tour was Canada Lee, an actor, and I'll pause to tell a small story about him.

He had been a very successful professional boxer who almost became champion at his weight class--just missed out. And then turned actor, and, to my best recollection, the first job he had was in the very important role in the Theatre Union play Stevedore, which he took over when Rex Ingram left for, I think the role of God in All God's Children. And Canada Lee did the role very well. He had natural aptitude as an actor and went on to a successful



acting career. I remember we had long talks in spare time during that three-day tour, and I must have met him again around 1950, because at that time a-- No, it must have been later than 1950. No it couldn't have been later than 1950, because I was out of the country. About 1950-- and he was then blacklisted also. And at that time, I think, Cry, the Beloved Country was playing in a theater on Broadway, and he had the lead in it. And he told me that he had wanted to sit out in front of the theater with a shoeshine kit and shine shoes right in front of this theater of which he was the featured player, because of the fact that he was blacklisted, and he wanted to dramatize it that way, but that he had been persuaded, I guess by lawyers or friends, or so, not to do it, and he regretted not having done it. Canada Lee died at an early age from hypertension and a heart attack, I think, and one can guess that being blacklisted might have contributed to his hypertension.

This tour with Henry Wallace was the beginning, for me, of two and a half years of a great deal of public speaking. I think I made more speeches than most of the Ten, because some had no ability in public speaking. I know that a week or so after I got home, or only a few days, there was a meeting in Gilmore Stadium at which I spoke along with the others of the Ten, and that was a meeting





to raise money for us as well as to reach the public. And then, with Karen Morley, an actress, I immediately went up to Santa Rosa for a convention of the California CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations]. I recall that in the talk I gave, I brought up the issue of blacklisting and connected it with the fact that blacklisting had existed in industry, so far as trade unions were concerned, ever since the year 1811, when Philadelphia shoemakers had tried to stop the first trade union, and that this was surely going to turn into a committee attack upon unionization as well. I remember that Slim Connelly, who was the secretary, I believe, of the CIO of California, told us that it had been a dead convention before we came, and he was so happy that we had been there.

The citations of contempt that were voted by the committee had to be approved by the House of Representatives, and this occurred on November 24, 1947. Although I had been the third one to be called to the stand in Washington, I was the first one brought up to be cited for contempt, and I assume that the reason was because the man who presented me for a contempt citation to the House was McDowell of Pennsylvania, and he gave a paragraph to the "Maltz controversy" to show what a disciplined Communist I was. And beside referring to that, he had the following to say. I'm reading from the Congressional Record, Monday, November 24, 1947, volume 93, number 151. He said:



Maltz is by no means a minor figure in Hollywood or in the Communist party. Maltz is a brilliant, colorful writer. Maltz, believe it or not, is way above the \$100,000 a year income bracket.

I pause in reading from him to say that, regrettably, I had never attained \$100,000 a year. [laughter] Going back to McDowell:

The citation of Albert Maltz was called here first because this man was the most arrogant, most contemptible, the most bitter of all of these people who do not believe in their own country. Here is a typical Communist intellectual, burning with a bitter hatred of the country he was born in, its government, its officials, and its people. Here is a man whose gifted pen has for years dripped with a scorn and hatred of the Congress of the United States, who refused to answer the direct and simple question this Committee has put to him. When Albert Maltz was asked again if he was a Communist by Robert Stripling, he replied, "I have answered that question, Mr. Quisling, I'm sorry." And there, the examination of Albert Maltz abruptly ended as I objected to this, and the Committee sustained the objection. This Maltz addressed Robert Stripling as Mr. Quisling, a worldwide synonym for traitor. Bob Stripling, who has stood for years against the things that Albert Maltz is trying to turn our nation into, who served honorably and with distinction in the armed forces of this republic.

The vote citing me for contempt was 346 yeas, 17 nays, answered present 1, not voting 68. [telephone rings-- tape recorder turned off]

The meeting of the motion picture executives and the bankers who control the studios, at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York, convened on the twenty-fourth of November, the same day as the citations for contempt. I don't believe



that this was an accident: I think they must have known that the citations were coming, they knew when they were scheduled to be brought up in Congress, and therefore they set their date to be at the same time. And on the twenty-sixth the meeting executives issued its blacklist statement, which is well known. I think there is no doubt but that the producers as a whole, with a few exceptions, did not want to have any blacklisting in the studios, because they wanted to use the men whom they blacklisted. And because, I think, most retained the attitude that it was not fair to interfere with a person's employment because of his politics or his thinking. However, the ones calling the tune were the New York bankers, and the executives and producers had to decide whether they wanted to continue in their jobs, and as Dore Schary later said, with complete candor, "I wanted to keep making films." Because the statement firing us was a reversal of everything Eric Johnston had sworn he would never do, and it was a reversal of what Schary had said, and what others had said, and they just quite coolly reversed themselves.

GARDNER: By New York bankers, you mean those who financed the films?

MALTZ: Yes, I mean those who financed the films and who had the real financial control of the studios.

GARDNER: Beyond the Jack Warners, and the--



MALTZ: Yes. Warner-- If the bankers, from whom Warner Brothers might be getting a \$50 million loan a year to finance a new product, didn't want to give the loan, Warner would be out. The fact that the studio had his name made no difference. Fox was forced out of Fox many years ago. And so they issued this blacklist statement.

Carey McWilliams, in his book Witch Hunt, wrote: "Ten writers were . . . blacklisted in the motion picture industry as a result of direct pressure applied by a congressional committee. If the Committee had subpoenaed ten editorial writers from ten newspapers . . . and then told their employers to fire them, it could not have been any clearer that the intention was censorial."

Now, this decision that was made at the Waldorf was more important by far to us in the Ten, and subsequently to some 240 or 250 others in the film industry, and, as a matter of fact, to thousands in the country, than just the contempt citation. Because, without the Waldorf statement, we, when we lost our case, could have gone to jail, served our time, and come back to work in the industry. And then, blacklisting would not have been carried out for others in the film industry and it would not have spread to all areas in American life. So that it was of enormous and maligned importance for the future. As evidence of that, two individuals who had not been





involved in the hearings were immediately blacklisted: one was Gale Sondergaard, wife of Herbert Biberman, and the other was Frances Lardner, a less well-known actress, wife of Ring Lardner.

The blacklist, not the contempt citations, was a tremendous shock to each one of us personally in the Ten. Financial problems faced everyone.

GARDNER: Hadn't you expected it, though? Had you really believed Eric Johnston?

MALTZ: Yes, we had believed Eric Johnston; all of us had. We knew what the committee was trying to do. But when Eric Johnston, who was head of the motion picture producers, said, "I promise you that as long as I live there will never be a blacklist," yes, we believed them. Now, it is true that right after we came back from the hearings, the five men under contract to the studios--they were Trumbo, Cole, Lardner, Dmytryk, and Scott--were fired by the studios, summarily. And that was a bad omen. But it still didn't mean that there was any policy which said that "You ten men will not be hired again." So that when that statement came out, saying we would not be hired, I remember that it was a distinct shock to me. So obviously I had not been prepared, and I don't think the others were prepared for that. I know that the Lardners, for instance, immediately put up for sale a house that they had just bought shortly before the hearings began.



I think I was in better financial condition than most of the Ten because my home and my way of life was more modest. There were two men, Ornitz and Bessie, who lived more modestly still, but they didn't have the savings that I did, because they hadn't been working. And Trumbo, who had made the most money of anyone, was land poor. I think I might pause for a moment to say that Trumbo, who had enormous qualities as a man in terms of talent, in terms of a most engaging personality, a brilliantly sharp mind and an offbeat, marvelous wit, was a man who had one fatal flaw, from my point of view, which interfered with the exercise of his talent: he loved to live on a very grand style. At one point I remember being in his home, before the hearings; I didn't know him well, but I was in his home on this occasion for some reason, I don't know. And it was a very large house on Beverly Drive, a house constructed like a southern mansion of pre-Civil War days. And in his study, on a kind of large board such as draftsmen use, he had the outline of the characters for what would have been a very large novel, or a series of novels. And this, like others of his books that he mentioned in one way or another, was never written, because the money was always going into real estate. Some years before the hearings came, he bought a ranch somewhere near the Cajon Pass, in a remote area where he had to build a road to get to the



plot of land, and I don't know how many tens of thousands of dollars he had sunk into this whole enterprise. And so, right after the hearings were over, Trumbo had to rush back to that ranch in order to try and turn out film stories that he could sell to keep up with his enormous obligations. I might mention that my wife and I let the houseworker go whom we had had previously to help with our two youngsters, and we invested in a dishwasher as a way of making household chores easier. One other consequence, immediately, of the hearings, was the breakup of Adrian's marriage--Adrian Scott. He had been married to some actress whose name I forget, and the marriage ended.

One problem that all of us with young children faced was the task of how to explain to them why we were in the trouble we were in, why we were being written about in the newspapers and talked about on the radio, and this was not easy at all. At the time of the hearings, my son was almost ten.



TAPE NUMBER: XVIII, SIDE ONE

DECEMBER 8, 1978

GARDNER: We'll continue with the trials.

MALTZ: Yes, I was talking about the effect of the blacklist on individuals and spoke of the problem of those among us who had young children, and that was not a few. At the time of the hearings my son was almost ten (that's '47), my daughter was five. And it's extremely difficult to explain to children, especially the ten-year-old, what is going on because the ten-year-old can read the newspapers and he can listen to the radio (thank goodness there was no TV at that time in our house or around the neighborhood), and he will hear his father being called all sorts of names. And we found it, at the least, extremely difficult to explain why I was getting all of the attention I was, and often with such malice. In the case of one of us, Adrian Scott, the events in Washington caused the breakup of his marriage. He was married to some actress; I forget her name.

Not too long after we came back, however, the discovery was made that it was still possible for members of the Ten to write and sell original stories under pseudonyms, or with some practicing screenwriter putting his name on the manuscript. I know that Lester Cole and Dalton Trumbo did this through a very important agent who was himself going





to be blacklisted several years later, and that was George Willner, who was a very old friend of mine. (I had known Willner in Long Island City when he was at that time a business manager of the New Masses. He subsequently left that work and became an agent in Hollywood). However, this is not to be accepted as a picture of the blacklist situation as it was after 1951; then it became very different and I will describe it in due course. This was an interim period in which the studios, studio heads, I'm quite sure, did not believe that we were going to go to jail and had no anticipation of the stern blacklist that would occur in the future.

GARDNER: Nor the pressure that would come upon them in the next five years.

MALTZ: That's right. Very important. Nor the pressures that would come upon them. And so there was a laxness to it.

At the beginning of December Mark Hellinger called me and asked me if I would work on a film story, and I was happy to take it because now the situation was changed for me, of course, and I knew I was going to need to try and earn some money. He brushed off the events in Washington. He just didn't care about them at all, and we set to work. There was some piece of original material with a story line that was quite interesting. I remember that the title of it



was An Act of Violence, and I believe that a poor film was made of it five or six or seven years later. And I worked on it for only a week. During that week Hellinger made a quick trip to Sun Valley in order to see Hemingway, who was there skiing. Hellinger had option on all of Hemingway's short stories for films. He had made one, The Killers, and he wanted to talk with Hemingway about something or other. As he described it to me when he returned, it was a grueling trip because he had to change planes several times and finally fly into Sun Valley in a one-motored plane. He caught cold, and Hemingway was off skiing most of the day, and Hellinger sat at the hotel, coughing. When Hellinger came back and I met him at night at his home, he wanted to hear what I had come up with after working on it for four or five days. I began to tell him but he would interrupt me with paroxysms of coughing that were so severe that I begged him to just go to bed, and we'd meet when he felt better. But he kept saying, "No, no, don't mind this. This is doing me good. This is better than medicine"--meaning that he liked what I was telling him. And so I told him what I had in my notes, and we agreed to meet on Saturday, which was, I guess, two days off. But I was to call him first and when I called him, he came to the phone and said that he really didn't feel well enough to meet with me,



and we set it up for Monday, I believe. That night he apparently felt better and went down to a projection room where he had to see a film, and he died of a second heart attack. I don't know if I mentioned in this earlier about his having had a heart attack while Naked City was shooting. Did I?

GARDNER: I don't think you did, no.

MALTZ: Well, this is perhaps an interesting thing to comment on. In the summer of '47 this . . . well, it was not many months before this, during the shooting of Naked City in New York, Hellinger had had a heart attack. The doctors wanted him to stay in bed a given number of weeks, but he felt better after several weeks, and he just left the hospital. Feeling better after a heart attack is a frequent phenomenon, and Hellinger, more than most, had a magical feeling that he was just the same as he had always been; it's as though he hadn't really experienced anything that was damaging. I saw the same thing with Martin Rackin, with whom I had worked in the late sixties and seventies. And Hellinger came back to New York in a plane, although he was advised not to do so--that was before the time of pressurized planes--came back to Los Angeles, I mean, in a plane, and he went right to work. He called me very soon after to see a version of Naked City, to see Naked City in a projection room. The projection room was on the second



story and the stairs leading up was quite long. When we were halfway up, he had to pause to recover his breath. Now, he hadn't told me that he'd had a heart attack, but I could see that something was wrong, and I asked him why he didn't order a projection room on the first floor. He said, oh, no, he didn't want to say anything like that because then word might get around that he was not physically fit. And this was just a temporary little thing, and he was talking a big deal with David Selznick, and he didn't want any word to get out that he was not well. I thought nothing more about it. And so here was this man who knew he had had a heart attack and should have known that severe coughing is a strain for a heart, and yet he just went on ignoring what had happened to him and died at forty-four.

I was reminded of the fact that only, I think, the year before, in 1946, when I was in Catalina I had been asked to teach chess to a man I didn't know, a film producer who had done a lot of Tarzan films. I don't think of his name at the moment, although I should know it [Sol Lesser]. Because his physician had said that in the long recuperative period that he needed from his massive heart attack it would be good for him if he could have an interesting game like chess. And he was on Catalina in an area that required me to take a motorboat and go there, and I did, and taught him the game. And he's still alive in his eighties as I talk now. And Mark Hellinger died at his young age.





Another man who was somewhat similar in his belief in magic about his own physical state was Oscar Lewis, who was a friend of mine. Oscar was the anthropologist.

GARDNER: Right.

MALTZ: And he also died in his middle fifties by working under pressures that were too big for him. So that's that point. Oh, there is an item that should have been mentioned earlier in the year 1947, because there will be more about it later. Even though I was-- Oh, no, Edward Robinson-- No, this was before the case, Edward G. Robinson, whom I had met in the course of my one week of work on The Red House, got in touch with me and asked me to write a speech for a meeting that he was going to be at which was organized by the Hearst press each year and was called I Am an American Day, and it took place in Soldiers Field in Chicago, which always attracted 100,000 people. And I didn't know that I was just the newest one in a long string of writers that Robinson had gone to to have people write speeches for him. However, he was a man who had ideas of his own and he told them to me, and they were very good ones. He just needed somebody to put it into words and I was perfectly happy to do it for him. There will be rather a payoff on it when I come to his testimony before the committee.



As soon as the Ten, who had been held in contempt, had returned from Washington, there was the need to organize ourselves into a group that would be active in our own defense. We were facing the trials for criminal contempt of Congress, and there would be the costs of the trials which were enormous because, in order to properly handle them, in order to make a proper appeal, we had to buy the daily transcripts of the court reporter, and those would be very expensive. And even though our attorneys would work for nothing, the sums involved would be very large. So raising funds became an imperative duty, and we were no longer in a position of being able to assess ourselves for money.

We also, on the strong advice of our attorneys, set about to launch a public campaign for support because the Supreme Court always has shown itself to be responsive to public opinion. If we want to put it this way: if, on a given day in the United States, 50 million people walked all over the cities and towns in the United States saying "Free the Hollywood Ten," or "Don't let them go to prison," they would have an effect on the Supreme Court. And while the lawyers would take care of the legal cases, we had to organize the public campaign.

It came to our hiring an office at the Crossroads of the World in Hollywood, and recruiting volunteer helpers and, I think, probably one paid secretary, who might have been



(I'm not sure whether she was paid or volunteer) Pauline Lauber Finn, a friend of many of us who had been formerly secretary of the Writers Mobilization during the war. Very, very interestingly, a young girl, extremely attractive and sweet-natured, by the name of Lori Niblo volunteered to help us, and this was of great interest because her brother Fred Niblo was one of the writers who was a member of the committee opposed to us, the Motion Picture Committee for the Preservation of American Ideals.\*

GARDNER: Did the others of the original Unfriendly Nineteen participate at all in this?

MALTZ: I'm going to mention that. That's a very relevant question. One very important project that was launched was the writing of a book that became Hollywood on Trial, by Gordon Kahn. Gordon was a former New York newspaperman who had worked, I think, in the Daily Mirror, and he was very well fitted to write a book rapidly as well as accurately. He was a very small man, probably no more than about five feet three, and an extremely witty man, and the only man I've ever known who wore a monocle. I think that we probably got some contributions to start our organization off from Robert Rossen and Larry Parks and a few others of the Nineteen. But I know that we saw very little of Milestone or Irving Pichel or others later. Some money was raised

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\*Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals



at a meeting we had had in mid-November at Gilmore Stadium, which was a much larger place than we could fill at that time. I remember that we planned a fund-raising dinner, which we held before the end of the year, where we raised a good sum of money and where we began to see a sign of the times. Because John Huston, who had been very active in the Committee for the First Amendment, agreed to be the chairman of the dinner, but he was a very soft chairman indeed, and there was no militancy at all in his attitude, and it was not long before he drifted away from any activity involved with us. I remember that we also planned a New Year's Eve party to raise money at the home, I think, of Larry Parks. Larry Parks at that time was very, very militant about the committee, and the change that occurred later is well known. The dynamo who made our committee work at the pace it did for the next two and a half years was Herbert Biberman, and I want to pause to give a bit of a sketch of him.

Herbert was a man about six feet one or two, broad-shouldered, lean and muscular. At that time, I think, let me see, in '47. . . . Just shut it off for a moment please.

[tape recorder turned off] A man of forty-five, he had been a director with the Theatre Guild in New York and had done some outstanding work. I think we spoke of this.

GARDNER: Briefly.

MALTZ: Yes, yes. And at the memorial meeting for him in





1971, different individuals said things about him which add up to a very accurate description. Stephen Fritchman, the Unitarian minister, said this: "People responded to Herbert, to his contagious enthusiasm for a common cause. He was endowed with an Old Testament righteous indignation. He had exuberant rhetoric and adrenaline. His very presence was impressive and could be formidable. He was ardent and earnest, a crusader in a hurry, and he brooked resistance reluctantly." Alvah Bessie spoke of his fanatical devotion. Adrian Scott recounted speaking in eastern colleges before hostile audiences and saying to Herbert before he went that he didn't know how to speak before audiences and never had spoken. And Herbert said, "You can speak, you'll go." And Adrian said, "I went." Lester Cole said Herbert managed to get many people to do things they would not otherwise do. And Trumbo said, "The man had style." And perhaps Trumbo was referring in part to the fact that Herbert was always impeccably dressed, and on his frame clothes looked magnificent. He always had a handkerchief in his jacket pocket and, for many years, a fresh flower in his lapel. He wore at least one very large ring on his large and powerful hands, and he unabashedly used perfumed toilet water many years before it became the habit for men to do that. And Mike Wilson spoke of his courage and fortitude and the capacity to endure and to achieve brotherhood in spite of opposition.



And this sums up the various sides of Herbert. For two and a half years he did absolutely nothing except act as the motor wheel and dynamo for the activities of the Hollywood Ten. And it was in every respect due to him that we carried on as active a national campaign as we did. You want to. . . .  
[tape recorder turned off]

Immediately after the hearings had ended, we put--the Unfriendly Nineteen put an advertisement in Variety which was headed by the following box: "Man Wanted for Motion Pictures. Must be willing to take dictation, must pass Americanism, religious, political and racial examinations. Apply Mr. Thomas, Washington, D.C." And then we had some text to follow it for a full page.

GARDNER: What was the date of that?

MALTZ: That was October 31, 1947, in Variety. I don't have a date for this next advertisement. It was in Variety, and it was declared a reprint of an advertisement appearing that day in the Washington Post. It was addressed to the members of the House of Representatives of the Congress with an earnest request that the Congress consider certain facts which I won't repeat here. But it was the attempt to influence the members of Congress not to vote contempt citations.

On the twenty-sixth of November, Howard Koch put an advertisement into the trade papers--this one was from



Variety--which was just excellent. He said: "I am not and have never been a member of the Communist party. In making this statement, which I do under oath, I reserve the right to refuse to make it if I so choose at any future hearing of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. In my opinion the refusal of the ten men to answer this question on the stand was consistent with their deepest convictions that their silence was more eloquent than all the words spoken." He then went on to condemn the Un-American Activities Committee and to try and enlist the support of others for his position. It was a remarkably fine statement. [tape recorder turned off]

Early in December a meeting of the Screen Writers Guild occurred in which there was a great deal of drama. The Producers Association had asked the Writers Guild to permit a committee from the producers to address them about the events that had occurred, and the board of the Writers Guild agreed. It was stated at the meeting that no Guild member would be permitted to make any comments while this committee from the producers was in the hall. The committee consisted of Walter Wanger, who had been a very liberal member of the community and, indeed, had been the producer of the film Blockade about Spain; and two MGM executives, Edward Mannix and James K. McGuinness; and Dore Schary. And it was Dore Schary who was chosen to be



the spokesman for the group. Schary, who had said on the witness stand that he would not fire anyone for his political associations, but who had remained within the ranks of the producers when the Hotel Waldorf statement had been issued, now said, in effect, to the assembled screenwriters: Give us these ten men. Don't do anything about the fact that they have been blacklisted and we promise you that there will be no more blacklisting in the film industry. That was the sum and substance of what went on.

Just the other night a friend of mine, a former screenwriter, Val Burton, described something that I had forgotten. He said that when . . . as the committee then left the hall on the way out, James McGuinness, who had produced Trumbo's film Thirty Seconds over Tokyo, sort of tried to half embrace Trumbo as he passed him on the aisle, and Val said that Trumbo looked as though he was hard put to restrain from hitting him, hitting McGuinness. When they left the room, Trumbo jumped up and asked for the floor and was given it. And he spoke with tremendous passion, in great cutting fashion, about this request, starting with the fact that on a certain night at two in the morning he had been called by Walter Wanger and asked if he would fly to San Francisco and write the speech that [Edward Reilly] Stettinius used in opening the first meeting of the United Nations. The Guild did not at that . . . [phone rings] Excuse me. [tape recorder turned off]





The members of the Guild did not take the position that the producers wanted at that time, although they would take it within several years. They voted to reject the request of the producers and voted to launch a legal suit against the producers for the firings and the blacklist. Thurman Arnold, who had been, I think, a former [assistant] attorney general, was engaged to represent the Guild in this case. The Guild itself did not-- I don't know whether the Guild voted any Guild funds for the case; I do know that there was an appeal to the members for contributions on it and that I contributed \$500 to it. Whatever happened to that \$500 I don't know--but nothing good.

This was a period in which we began to feel the pressures of political reaction. At random, certain examples come to my mind: for instance, a kind of rogues' gallery of our faces appeared in the whole Hearst press in which it was very easy to see how the photographs had been touched up so that we looked like a row of gangsters. It was the beginning of a steady stream of slander on the part of columnists like Westbrook Pegler, George Sokolsky, Hedda Hopper, Louella Parsons, Fulton Lewis, and others. I know I got letters from crazy schizophrenics and some poison-pen letters and several death threats by phone. Phone tapping, of course I mentioned before, occurred always.

GARDNER: Did you have any significant support in the press of columnists of any kind?



MALTZ: No. There were in the press attacks, sometimes, or criticisms of the Un-American Activities Committee. There was that; but I don't recall any support of our position except in the Left press, and there was support in, let's say, in the Nation. And there was certainly support in the press that was the Communist press. There were all sorts of little incidents. I remember one morning I paused at a liquor store on my way to my office (the office I then had where I worked), and as I turned around to go out of the store, a woman and a man came up to me, and a flash light-bulb suddenly exploded in my face, and then they ran off and got into a car. This was probably just some independent photographer who had connected with me in some way, and she was going to try and sell a picture. Stupid irritations like that.

At the same time, there was another type of public reaction which was very good and very warming. For instance, a watchmaker who, when my wife gave her name, asked if she was my wife and then wouldn't take any money to repair my watch; a stewardess on a plane who paused just to whisper to me that she was all for the position we had taken, and other manifestations like that.

On December 11, there were preliminary-- I think I must have mentioned that we were indicted by a grand jury, but if I haven't, we were [indicted] within a short time after the



citations by Congress. And we were booked, we had preliminary bookings downtown in Los Angeles, with the usual press photographs. There were photographs for just about anything. And so it amounted to being fingerprinted, pleading, and there was a \$1,000 bail assessment for each of us, and Herbert Biberman put up \$10,000 so that we wouldn't have to pay any bail bond money.

My income from writing in 1947 was \$43,000, and it came from The Cross and Arrow royalties and what I had earned from Naked City and from the story "Evening in Modesto" that I had sold.

The first event in 1948 was that we had to go to Washington D.C. for the actual arraignment. Our lawyers, of course, had requested that we be formally arraigned in Los Angeles, but the government insisted that it had to be at the scene of the crime. And it was very clearly the government's desire to drain us of money. We had to cross the country for a one-hour arraignment in court and come back again. But that was costly. And the government also wanted to hold the trial in a city that it controlled much more than it did in L.A., and so we had to go. I went by train, with Adrian Scott on the train with me, and I hired a small bedroom, I guess it's called, and I set to work immediately on McKeever, which I think I had stopped with about ninety-three pages in hand.



In Washington we appeared before a judge, and each one of us pleaded not guilty. We were then taken downstairs in an elevator to a booking room. It was in this room that we would descend in two and a half years on our way to jail. We were fingerprinted and photographed, and I'm quite sure that I had mixed feelings of apprehension on the one hand, and a measure of pride on the other. And, since it came to my mind the other day in preparing these notes, I expect that at that time I remembered reading in Gorky, some autobiographical material of Gorky's, that he felt an immense pride when he was first arrested in czarist Russia because he had then officially joined those on the honor role of being opposed to czarism. Well, I was not living in czarist Russia, and I didn't feel the same way about it, but there was a certain measure of pride in the situation.

Naked City opened in January to very fine reviews and to smashing business. Alas, Hellinger was not there to witness it, and that was very unhappy. I was very glad about its commercial success because Hellinger had told me after I finished the script that he was going to give me 5 percent of his profits. This was not a contractual matter between us, but it was something that he said he always wanted to do with people with whom he worked. I know that Jules Dassin got a percentage, and I don't know about Wald, but I presume he might have also. And this proved to be





important to me in the years of the blacklist. Naked City broke all box office records in the twenty-eight-year history of the Capitol Theatre in New York. And members of the League of Women Shoppers distributed petitions in front of the Capitol Theatre which were addressed to Louis B. Mayer, chairman of the Producers Steering Committee. The leaflet said Naked City was written by Albert Maltz in collaboration with Malvin Wald; Maltz, one of the Hollywood Ten, is blacklisted by the motion picture industry; and Maltz and nine other men cannot earn a living, they cannot work on another picture unless you, the audience, demand that the producers end the blacklist. And it said, "Fold this leaflet here and mail," and attached to it was something already addressed to Louis B. Mayer. Well, this was prepared in the office of the Hollywood Ten, and it was an example of the type of campaign that we waged throughout the two and a half years; we sought any opportunity we could to advance our case.

The political scene at this time was the following. The hysteria that had started at the top level of government with Truman's loyalty oath order in March '47 had spread in the course of the year. Truman himself had extended the oath to cover employees of industries filling military contracts--some millions of individuals--and of those millions, not quite 500 resigned rather than sign the oath.



But only a few hundred were ever fired even though among the questions used to test loyalty was whether an individual had ever listened to the music of Hanns Eisler or read a novel by Howard Fast. The rise to prominence and power of informers became the fashion of the day even though they invariably seemed to be afflicted with pasts that couldn't bear examination, or problems like alcoholism, or the inability to give testimony that wasn't easily disproven as perjury. School and town libraries began to remove books like Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath, Fast's Citizen Tom Paine, and Lillian Smith's Strange Fruit, and magazines like the Nation. Bertrand Russell proposed that the Russians should be threatened with atomic annihilation if they continued to reject America's bomb control plan. Norman Thomas, a longtime Socialist party leader, expressed the belief that civilization depended on obliterating the Soviet Union. Columnist after columnist and public figure after public figure spoke as though there had to be a war with the Soviet Union, or that if the Soviet Union ever got the atom bomb, the United States would be finished. Samuel Grafton, the columnist on the New York Post, and an old friend of mine, wrote that the nerves of the American people were being rubbed raw. There were voices against this: Henry Wallace, Alexander Meiklejohn (former president of the [University of] Wisconsin), [University of] Chicago's president Robert M. Hutchins, Henry Steele. . . . [phone rings--tape recorder turned off]



TAPE NUMBER: XVIII, SIDE TWO

DECEMBER 8, 1978

GARDNER: You left off as you were describing . . .

MALTZ: Yes.

GARDNER: . . . your support.

MALTZ: Yes, Henry Steele Commager of Columbia University, Zechariah Chafee (a constitutional expert) of Harvard, and Supreme Court justices Douglas and Black. But it was extremely interesting that leading literary figures like Faulkner, Hemingway, Steinbeck, Erskine Caldwell, Eugene O'Neill, Norman Mailer, and others of that status were silent. However, the forces of the Left and liberal progressive forces were full of fight. On Labor Day, 1948, there was a fight-back meeting in Gilmore Stadium in Los Angeles at which Henry Wallace spoke. Wallace, to paraphrase a footnote on page 78 of The American Inquisition by Belfrage, Wallace had been barred from the Hollywood Bowl and the University of California campus. He spoke to an overflow audience of 30,000 in Gilmore Stadium. Among his active sponsors at the time, or accompanying speakers, or financial contributors at the meeting, were Katharine Hepburn, Jose Ferrer, Paul Draper, Zero Mostel, Lillian Hellman, Canada Lee, Uta Hagen, Paul Robeson, Charles Chaplin, Edward G. Robinson, Dorothy Parker, John Garfield, Hedy LaMarr, Frank Tuttle, Budd Schulberg, and Paul Henreid.



Linus Pauling, Nobel laureate scientist, was a speaker and California's ex-attorney general, Robert W. Kenny, chaired the meeting. I have mentioned these names in order to give an additional comment. First, I wrote Kenny's speech. Of the other names I've just read, the following happened after the Ten went to jail: Ferrer, Frank Tuttle and Budd Schulberg became informers; Paul Draper, Zero Mostel, Lillian Hellman, Canada Lee, Paul Robeson and Dorothy Parker were blacklisted; Canada Lee died.

In 1948 Wallace became a candidate for president on a third-party ticket, the Progressive party. The media treated him not as a former vice-president but as an agent of Stalin. For documentation of this I would recommend a book The Press and the Cold War by James Aronson, published by Bobbs-Merrill in 1970. Norman Thomas labeled Wallace "a Communist captive, preaching peace by blind appeasement." This and infinitely more comprised the atmosphere in which we in the Hollywood Ten prepared for our trials.

The Hollywood Ten received support from many individuals and from varied groups in different communities. It was small groups of people who invited the Ten to send speakers to different university campuses. Nelson Algren, the novelist, headed a group in Chicago. The Arts, Sciences and Professions [Committee] of the Progressive Citizens of America was very active, primarily in New York and Los Angeles.





The Unitarian church in Los Angeles, under the leadership of Stephen Fritchman, gave us full support. The Communist party of Hollywood helped us, but the Communist party nationally did not. To my best recollection, the national Communist party gave us no help whatsoever. It was embattled by various attacks upon it, and indeed, in the summer of 1948, its top leadership was arrested under the Smith Act. But even beforehand, its attitude seemed to be, by implication, you're doing fine boys, go ahead. And we had no leadership from the Communist party in Los Angeles. We made all decisions and did everything on our own.

At the end of March 1948 I spoke in New York City at a "Stop Censorship" meeting in the Hotel Astor ballroom. The people who had been active in the committee had done a fine job of organizing, and the audience of perhaps 300 or 400 was an audience of very distinguished people in literature, theater, and the arts in general. I know I recognized certain individuals in the audience like Elmer Rice and John Hersey and Joe Hirsch (the painter) and others. I was the main speaker and I was preceded by Burgess Meredith, Florence Eldridge, Jose Ferrer, and Christopher La Farge. I made my principal appeal on the issue of censorship. [phone rings--tape recorder turned off] I said this in the course of my remarks:



We who are assembled here tonight are varied people. We cannot possibly have the same tastes, creeds, sympathies or ideas. It is not urgent that we do so. It is extremely urgent, however, that as artists working in different fields we preserve for ourselves the right to work free of censorship. That right depends upon the freedom to think and to express our thoughts.

And then, in a reference to remarks I had made earlier, I said:

This evil has a long history. Are you or are you not a Christian, you who commit treason against the Roman state by your belief in Jesus Christ? Are you or are you not a Jew? Keep silent at your peril because it is the Inquisition that asks. Do you uphold the God-given right to own slaves? And if you don't, you'd better not speak out, you damned abolitionist, because you'll rot in a swamp. Are you or are you not an Irishman and a Roman Catholic? And why should I, a member of the American party in 1854, give you a job, rent you a house, allow you liberty the equal of mine? Are you or are you not a member of a trade union? If you are, you can't work here. The question varies, the punishment varies, but it is essentially the same question directed to the same ends. For myself, I will not go along with these questions. I ask the right to my own ideas, the right to speak them or hold them in private, free of inquisition.

My newspaper scrapbook tells me that I received an ovation after this, and it's interesting that I completely forgot that over the years, because the temper of the times was such that this committee languished and did very little afterwards.

Each time that I returned home from a trip like this, I put in as many hours on McKeever as I could. But there



were always meetings of the Ten, meetings with the attorneys, sometimes I made three local speeches a week. However, my adrenaline was flowing at a very high rate, and I kept going many hours a day. The others of the Ten were also very busy, of course, but didn't have the same schedule as mine. I'm sure that Lawson did a great deal of local speaking. I don't recall whether he went on any of the national tours. And I think it was the same with Sam Ornitz. Lester Cole, Adrian Scott, Ring Lardner, and Alvah Bessie had various speaking engagements in the East and Midwest, although Lardner went to Switzerland for some months to work on a film, and Dmytryk was abroad for about a year and a half in London, during which time he made two films.

GARDNER: There was no objection to . . .

MALTZ: No, this . . .

GARDNER: . . . any of the Ten leaving the country?

MALTZ: No, there was no passport policy at that time. But later, as I will mention, after we lost our case in the appellate court, both Dmytryk and, I think, Lardner, who was also still abroad, were asked by the Justice Department to return home, and they did so. My records tell me that in the middle of May there was a meeting in Madison Square Garden which was an anti-Mundt Bill rally under the auspices of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee. The Mundt Bill, which I think later became the Mundt-Nixon Bill . . .



GARDNER: Your tape's out.

MALTZ: Thank you. [tape recorder turned off] . . .

Nixon bill established a Subversive Activities Control Board that required so-called heretical groups to register as traitors. Howard Fast and I were the featured speakers at this meeting, and I don't remember anything about it at all. [laughter] It was just another meeting. Now, it could be that at this time, when I was in New York, I was telephoned and asked to join Charles Katz, one of our lawyers, in a trip to Washington for purposes that I'm now vague about; it could possibly have been in 1949 rather than in this year. All I know is that it was in the baseball season, because when Charles and I were in Manhattan, Charlie said, "We've got an afternoon, let's take a cab over to Brooklyn and watch Jackie Robinson play, I've never seen him play." So we went to a Dodger baseball game. But I do recall several events in Washington that I want to mention, one in particular.

We saw and chatted with a man who was a member of Truman's private cabinet. He was his adviser on minorities (and I don't remember his name), and I guess all we did was talk about the significance of the case to him and hoped that he might drop a little pearl in Truman's ear. The fascinating thing that occurred there was when we went to dinner in Washington at Harvey's Restaurant--I don't know whether I mentioned Harvey's before, have I?





GARDNER: No, I don't think so.

MALTZ: Well Harvey's Restaurant at that time was probably the best, or one of the best, eating places in Washington. It occupied several floors of an old building, and it had superb fish and a great ale which was a blend of its own. It also had an aura of age and tradition about it. And so whenever we were in Washington we went and ate at Harvey's. I had heard, I think, before this night that J. Edgar Hoover ate in Harvey's a good many nights a week, but since I had previously only been on one of the upper floors, I had never seen him. This time we were seated on the ground floor and with us was Lee Pressman, a chief attorney of the CIO whom I have mentioned earlier. And after we had been there for a little bit, J. Edgar Hoover came in. Now, it is interesting that in a period when gossip columnists like Winchell thought it was a neat scoop if they could mention that some prominent individual was a swish that there wasn't a whisper about Hoover, because I have never seen someone who was more obviously homosexual than Hoover was. He was a much bigger man than I realized, heavy and paunchy, with a very red face. And his behavior was unmistakable. Now, while we were sitting there, a man my age came with a party, passed me, and said with a little smile, "Hello, Albert," and went right on. This was Leon Keyserling, who was President Truman's chief economic



adviser and who had been a schoolmate of mine at Columbia College. We had been friends there, and it was revelatory of the period that he didn't stop to shake hands, and stop for a moment or pause for some short chat, but said hello and went right on.

However, it was also interesting that another party came in, and one of the members I recognized. It was the attorney, Morris Ernst, who was active in the [American] Civil Liberties Union and who had been an ally of mine in the council of the Authors League of America in opposing those who wanted to kick the Screen Writers Guild out of the Authors League. Morris Ernst threw up his hands in joyful surprise at seeing J. Edgar, and both men shook hands very warmly--I forget whether they embraced. I learned later that Morris Ernst had become Hoover's personal lawyer.

However, the most interesting person of that evening was Lee Pressman. From the time that Hoover entered, Pressman became impossible. He changed his body position in his chair about three times every minute, exclaiming, "Oh, I can't look at that man! Oh, how I hate that man! How that man hates me!" And he went on like this in a manner that was impossible to curb. He spoiled dinner for me, if not also for Charlie Katz, because of this terrible restlessness and that repeated refrain. It's very fascinating that it was about . . . I think it was shortly after we entered



prison that Pressman became an informer. And this was the payoff on his behavior that night.

One further grace note about this: somewhere along in the case Herbert Biberman told me that-- Oh, no . . . it was later, in Washington when we were waiting to go into jail, that Herbert Biberman told me that he had made a speech at someone's home in which he referred to Hoover's homosexuality. (It was, I think, the kind of invidious reference that nowadays Herbert would not make about someone who is homosexual.) However, the next morning two FBI men were at his door, and they said, "You made a reference to Mr. Hoover last night, and you're going to have to either put up or shut up." And Herbert told me this because, as we were waiting to be sentenced, he had the fear that he might get two years for having made that remark. The reason why he could get two years, and it was the same for all of us, was that we had been indicted on two counts for refusal to answer two questions, and each of them could have gotten us a year. It turned out quite differently, as I'll mention in due course.

In April '48 the book by Gordon Kahn, Hollywood on Trial, was published. It remains today an excellent book after thirty years. And whenever we, any one of us in the Ten spoke, we would take copies of the book with us for sale. All royalties went to the financial needs of the case and



not to Gordon. On May 2 or 3, I was in Washington for my trial. John Howard Lawson, the first of us to go on trial, had already been convicted, and Dalton Trumbo was on trial. Now, all of us were staying, not at the luxury Hotel Shoreham, but at a very modestly priced old hotel, the Lafayette, which happened to be across the large area of Lafayette Park from the White House. I remember that I was in a room, a two-bed room, with Ben Margolis.

I'd like to pause and make a comment on the role of the FBI in those trials, and I'll speak now of the role of the FBI in the blacklist.

When Lawson and Trumbo were on trial, the FBI went to the neighbors of the jurors. Now, J. Edgar Hoover invariably asserted before Congress, when he was asking for money for his outfit, or when he was giving out publicity releases, that the FBI was merely an investigative agency and that it turned its findings over to the attorney general and did nothing else. Well, this was as large a lie as that liar has ever told. Because it was in fact a very active secret police following Hoover's directions. Now, most of the jurors in the Trumbo and Lawson cases were government employees. And by sending FBI agents to the neighbors of the jurors, the FBI knew very well that the neighbors would immediately run to the home of the jurors and say, "Hey, the FBI has been here asking about your husband."





No more intimidating an act could have been conceived to get those jurors to vote guilty in the case of Lawson and Trumbo. Later, during the blacklist when someone hired a blacklisted person, the FBI immediately intervened there. It would go to an employer and say . . . two men would go to an employer and say, "I wonder if you know that so-and-so is a subversive and that he refused to testify before the Un-American Activities Committee?" Most often the employer would say, "I didn't know that. Thank you very much. I will get rid of him immediately." And in that way the FBI sought to continue barring the given individual from any employment whatsoever. But if the employer said, "Yes, I know that. It doesn't make any difference to me," the FBI agents would say, "Well, now, that's very interesting. We wonder why you are willing to hire a subversive, and you're not concerned about it." And thereupon they would begin to investigate the employer. And this was all of a part with what was later revealed in the Watergate period, that the FBI had entered into secret activities to influence election campaigns, that it had committed burglaries, and that in general it acted like the secret police of any dictatorship.

In view of the fact that Lawson had been convicted and that it looked as though Trumbo would be as well, our attorneys had discussed trying something with me that they



hoped might possibly have an effect upon the jury. That was to have me act as a cocounsel with them, and have me speak to the jury somewhere along, I guess, at the end of the case in the final summation. And so I didn't attend the last several days of the Trumbo trial, but I worked in the hotel on an assignment that Ben gave me. And when he came back in the afternoon and heard the way I had handled it, I had done everything wrong from the point of view of the court, because he said that I would be interrupted by objections by the prosecutor in every line I suggested, and I felt very frustrated and didn't know how I was going to be able to do the job.

It proved that I didn't have to because, when my day in court came in the next day or so, the attorneys, after I had been in court for about an hour, came to an agreement with the prosecutor which was as follows: that the eight of us who had not yet been tried would agree to accept the final verdict in the Lawson and Trumbo cases. If the verdict was that they go to jail, then we would automatically go to jail, and vice versa. This was desirable from our point of view because the cost of eight more trials was enormous, and also the time involved for the attorneys; and it was satisfactory to the government in order not to repeat all of the cases. And so I did not go on trial at that time, nor did the other seven.



This might be a moment for me to express what I felt so keenly then: the enormous debt that I think this nation owes to those courageous and principled and hardworking attorneys who have helped keep the United States a democracy. Because in so many instances the law of our land has depended upon particular decisions and cases, and if not for attorneys who were willing in many cases to risk their own status in society and to work, often without fee, for principled reasons, this would be a very different nation.

After the agreement had been reached, I drove back to Philadelphia and New York for meetings with Eddie Dmytryk, who had come for his trial also, and with his fiancée, Jean Porter, a young actress. They wanted to get married, and they had picked some place in Maryland where instant marriages were legally possible. I stopped off with them and, since I was there, became their best man. I mention this because it became extremely important later in my ability to write a certain article I did about Dmytryk in the year 1951, when he became an informer.

In June, [for] three days--June 4, 5, and 6--there was a peace conference in Hollywood that was held at the Roosevelt Hotel. I don't know how it was that I became as involved in it as I did. I think it was just



that there was a vacuum in the organization of the conference, which was done by the ASP [Arts, Sciences, and Professions Committee], and in some way I gave an enormous amount of my time to it for about three weeks. [tape recorder turned off] The conference took place at the Hollywood Masonic Temple on Hollywood Boulevard, and the honorary chairmen were Thomas Mann and a scientist, I believe, Frits Went. We had a good many scientists involved in the several days of discussion, the most prominent of whom, perhaps, was Dr. Philip Morrison, who had been the physicist who had assembled the first atomic bomb in the plane when it was dropped over Hiroshima, and it was of course of great significance that now he was out in a public campaign for peace. Carey McWilliams spoke and Thomas Mann spoke, and I remember I spoke at it also.

I remember with feeling a private meeting that took place before that conference at the home of two people I knew casually and whose names I forget with embarrassment. I'll think of it later. They subsequently were the authors of the play Anne Frank [Albert Hackett and Frances Goodrich]. And this was a meeting of some people in the film industry to try and get their support, their public support, of this peace conference. I remember a moment in which Shelley Winters, who was then a young rising person in the field, said to Burt Lancaster, "I'll come out for it if





you will, Burt." And she added very frankly, " I don't want to lose this little career I've got going. I've been a hoofer for too many years." The purpose of telling this story is to illustrate the climate of fear surrounding the word peace. [doorbell rings--tape recorder turned off]

In the middle of June there was a meeting at the Embassy Auditorium on the case of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, the members of the board who were on their way to jail, and I forget who the speakers were-- I have it somewhere in my scrapbooks--but one of them was Dorothy Parker, and I was asked to pick her up because she needed transportation. I had never met her before. She lived with her husband, [Alan] Campbell, in a musty apartment, a musty old apartment in Hollywood, and she made me wait for about fifteen minutes while, with a vacant look, she went on a hunt for her gloves. And I didn't know whether she was swacked or what was happening with her, but I know that I was astonished by that empty look in her eyes. However, she spoke extremely well when we were on the platform. And so I never figured her out.

On that day Variety published an open letter from the Ten on the case of the Anti-Fascist Committee which Alvah Bessie and I wrote. And in the middle of August I



published a letter in the Saturday Review of Literature on the case of the Anti-Fascist Committee in which I said the following. [tape recorder turned off] I said that I believe that the Saturday Review needed to call upon the leading literary men and women of America, calling upon them publicly by name--Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, Pearl Buck, John Dos Passos, John Steinbeck, Louis Bromfield, Robert Sherwood, Carl Van Doren and Bernard De Voto, John Marquand, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Eugene O'Neill--and ask them to interrupt their work and their lives in order to speak out on this issue, to agitate and split the sky with their indignation. "And I believe deeply that you must insist that if they remain silent, then they will be abdicating their moral responsibility." And those people remained silent. And the issue in the Joint Anti-Fascist case was very much simpler than the Hollywood Ten case. The members of the board had refused to hand over to the Un-American Activities Committee the names of contributors to refugee relief. And yet there was silence.

When I was about three-quarters finished with the Simon McKeever novel, I got the offer of an excellent film job from an independent producer. It came to me through Adrian Scott. The material was splendid and the money was good. It was not what I would have gotten if there had been no blacklist, but it was much higher than the black-market



rates that generally obtained after 1951. And I wanted it, in part, to use the money for the legal fund of the Ten I continued work on McKeever while I was starting to plan the film, and when I finished McKeever at the end of September, I began full-time work on the movie.

GARDNER: What was the film?

MALTZ: It was a film that we'll call the unnamed film. I can't name it still today because of the individual who put his name to it. The individual who put his name to it had no knowledge of what would happen to it, and it became an extremely successful film when it came out. It was the most successful film that he had ever written, and he got a great deal of mileage out of it. Now, when he put his name to it, he didn't know that would happen; and yet there was no way for him to repudiate it when it did happen. He had to accept the rewards that came with it, and it would be an unfair penalty on him ever to say that he hadn't written it. So I. . . .

GARDNER: You never intend to reveal that?

MALTZ: No. I'm stuck with it as he was stuck with it.

When I finished the manuscript of McKeever, I asked a number of friends to read it and give me their suggestions and criticisms, and one of them was Adrian Scott. And Adrian came back with a comment that astonished me: he said that he thought it could make a very good film. It had



never occurred to me in the course of writing it that there would be a film in a story about an old man. But he asked me if I would let him try and set up an independent production, and I said of course. And he went out and gave the manuscript to Walter Huston, who was then about the leading actor in American films, and Huston was delighted with the role and used to go around reading from the manuscript at parties. And so I just waited to see what would happen.

I think I might mention that whenever I was in Los Angeles, there was during this whole period, once a week, a five o'clock tennis game with Judd Marmor, who was an old friend of mine--in fact, we had gone to college together, and he was now a practicing analyst and would become president of the Psychiatric Society of America--and with another analyst, and then with either Adrian Scott or a motion picture producer, Julian Blaustein, who was my friend. The Sundays at Roxbury Park continued with my kids and always with a tennis game in the afternoon with Phil Stevenson and a journalist we knew, Michael Simmons, and one of his two sons.

During 1948 signs of what the blacklist in film writing would mean to my literary career as a whole began to become apparent. The project by the former head of German UFA to make The Cross and the Arrow as a film went down the drain, and I had been in correspondence since '46 with a translator in the American Zone of Germany. It





was a very cordial correspondence, and she had translated and published a number of my stories. But I suddenly received a letter which she wrote me with great regret telling me that she could no longer collaborate with me and asked me to stop writing to her because it would get her in trouble. However, there continued to be reprints of my work abroad in many other countries.

I see by my publication ledger that I did two other pieces of writing in 1948. I wrote a brochure called "We Stand Against the Inquisitors" that was signed by Harlow Shapley, Carey McWilliams and others. I have no copy of it. And I participated in writing the conclusion to the appeal brief of the defense in the case of the United States against John Howard Lawson. This was merely a request on the part of the lawyers for me to try and get, I don't know, some flowers into the brief. Now, my income from writing in 1947 had been \$43,000, and in '48 it was fifteen thousand and a half. Most of this was from The Cross and the Arrow royalties in the United States and abroad, and several thousand from the Naked City royalties, and 7,000 from the unnamed movie. In. . . .

GARDNER: I'm just about at the end of the tape, so why don't we break for the moment here.

MALTZ: All right.



TAPE NUMBER: XIX, SIDE ONE

DECEMBER 18, 1978

MALTZ: I continued to work on the unnamed film until mid-February, when the producer and I were satisfied with it. It was a big job, but it had gone very well and had taken me only five months. Before I was finished, we had had to get a writer we knew to put his name on it, and this was accomplished. The screenplay sold very quickly to a studio for a large sum. Since there are so many stories about producer-hustlers, I would like to mention that there had been a misunderstanding between me and this producer about the sum that I would get if it were sold. I thought it was going to be about 5,000 more than he recalled it to be, and since he knew that I wanted to use most of it for the legal fund of the case, he just gave me the larger sum. And he's not the only producer I've known who is a man of absolute honor.

GARDNER: You couldn't name the producer either?

MALTZ: No, I can't name the producer. . . . A man of absolute honor.

At the end of February, I spoke at a testimonial dinner in San Francisco for a labor, Paul-- Well, I have to pause just a second . . . [tape recorder turned off] It was Paul Schnur. And I want to quote from it a little bit, because in order to face what was all around myself



and others in our society, I had a need to work out philosophic and political attitudes, and this is one example of that.

If there are things we cherish about this world and this nation of ours, and there is much to cherish, none of these goods have come to us by accident. The majesty of the American nation is the result of a process in which many people, celebrated and anonymous, participated. Ralph Waldo Emerson had a hand in the shaping of our lives when he joined the executive board of the Boston vigilante committee for the abolition of slavery\*; so also Dr. [Joseph] Goldberger, eating pellets of dung in order to demonstrate that pellagra is a disease of malnutrition and not of infection; so also the conservative jurist Charles Evans Hughes, condemning the 1921 Palmer raids against radicals as an outrage upon the entire American people. These were but three of the movers and shakers who, by one action or another, helped mold the world in which we live, and all that they did was part of the large turning wheel that is the march of the people. The New York City trade union that went to the Civil War in a body in order to abolish slavery; the Philadelphia shoemakers who organized a trade union in 1809 even though it was declared a conspiracy against the government to do so; the millions who have spoken up with courage to a neighbor and cried shame, who have signed petitions, tossed tea into Boston Harbor, given pennies to save Sacco and Vanzetti, walked picket lines--we are part of this, each one of us. We stretch far back, go deep, and can be effective. We have reason to feel kinship and take pride. We will not lose in the end in our quest for peace and social justice. It is impossible ultimately to lose a good fight. The struggle on behalf of a good fight is in itself a victory.

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\*Abolitionist Vigilante Committee of Boston



That's the end of that quotation, and perhaps I might want to reflect a little more upon the sum of what I said as to whether or not I believe it holds up. But the main point of it is that I was then not just speaking to others, I was speaking to myself. And it was of the greatest importance at that time, and it proved to be of even greater importance in the blacklist years, to find a philosophy by which one could live contentedly.

At the end of February '49 our attorneys argued the appeals of Lawson and Trumbo before the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington. During this period, hysteria, manufactured on high, continued in both the foreign and domestic scenes, and in both scenes it was fed by real events: for instance, the struggle with the Soviet Union over Berlin and the successful American and British airlift. This went on for six months.

Domestically, among the prime events was the first Alger Hiss trial of 1949, and this is perhaps the time to mention that, as everyone knows, Nixon started his real career, and it led to the presidency, over the Hiss case. In 1975 the bulletin of the New York Committee on Emergency Civil Liberties came out with a photograph of Nixon holding the microfilm found in the--allegedly found in the pumpkin papers by Chambers, the witness against Hiss. I've garbled my sentence, but it was Nixon holding the





microfilm up and peering at these photographs of "secret" documents that Hiss had allegedly turned over to Chambers. In '75, under the Freedom of Information Act, the content of these pumpkin papers was revealed. Several of them were blank, and the others were routine reports dealing with navy lifeboats, I believe, and fire extinguishers. So that here was a man who started on his way to the presidency by what must have been known as an absolute falsehood at that time.

GARDNER: Turn off for a second, let me tell you something.

[tape recorder turned off]

MALTZ: At the same time that the Hiss case was being tried in New York, there was the trial of the eleven Communist party leaders on grounds of conspiracy to overthrow the government by force and violence. And in late August there were the terrible events at Peekskill, New York. Just in case this oral history is ever read by someone who is not familiar with the events, I would like to give a short quote on it from the Belfrage book. [tape recorder turned off]

This is a quotation from page 107 of the Belfrage book:

"Learning of a plot by male, female, and child heretics to hear Paul Robeson sing of peace and brotherhood in a quiet spot near Peekskill, New York, American Legionnaires mobilized local patriots to frustrate them with clubs, rocks, and police and state-trooper support. The heretics



refused to take warning from the first onslaught and organized a second concert with subversive war veterans forming a protective ring around the audience. The strategy of the patriots, among whom women and teen-agers abounded, was to line the only exit road after Robeson finished singing. Police formed a gauntlet through which concertgoers could be forced for the club-wielders' convenience, and in a polyphony of shattered car-windshields and cries of 'Commies, nigger-lovers, kikes, string 'em up!' substantial casualties were inflicted: 145 injured, one almost totally blinded, two not quite killed." Howard Fast, who was on the platform at both meetings, wrote a pamphlet called Peekskill, U.S.A., which was published by the Civil Rights Congress and which is a very graphic account of the absolutely hideous events. At the second meeting there were close to 25,000 people, but the attack upon them was so tactically organized by the police and the vigilantes that no defense was possible once they had left the meeting ground.

During this period the blacklisting and blackmailing activities of Red Channels, Counterattack, and AWARE were going on and getting strength. Adrian Scott had been unable to get backing for a film based on my McKeever novel. And some weeks before official publication date, I received bound copies.



GARDNER: Who was your publisher?

MALTZ: Little, Brown and Company.

GARDNER: It still was Little, Brown?

MALTZ: Yes, they had published all of my novels before I was blacklisted--well, my three novels, that's all there were. And I gave the copies to Mary Baker, my agent, and after she read the book she said, why don't we submit it for films? Because, at that time, the blacklist statement, the blacklist edict, applied only to the employment of the ten men and not to original material. To my absolute astonishment, three studios bid on it in the first week. And we sold it for the highest price offered, \$35,000, to Twentieth Century-Fox.

GARDNER: So you couldn't write for the studios, but they could buy your novel?

MALTZ: That's right. That was the situation then. Fox immediately began production plans. Fox hired Jules Dassin to direct it, a writer whose name I forget to do the screenplay, and they opened negotiations with Walter Huston to play the role. Now, I want to read. . . . [tape recorder turned off] Within four or five days after the announcement by Fox that it had purchased my book, a campaign was started in the Hearst press to have Fox back out of the purchase. And the Motion Picture Committee [Alliance] for the Preservation of American Ideals began to bombard the board



of directors of Fox in New York in protesting this purchase. And within two weeks of the date of its purchase, the board of directors in New York announced that McKeever was not going to be made as a film. And the New York Times noted that "studio abandons The Journey of Simon McKeever in a move unique in Hollywood," saying that "public abandonment of a story property less than two weeks after its purchase is unique in Hollywood practice . . . and although neither Spyros Skouras, president of the corporation, nor Darryl Zanuck, vice president in charge of production, was available for comment, it was understood that the decision was reached as a matter of corporate policy, in effect disavowing the purchase because of Maltz's alleged Communist connections." The Nation wrote the following: "The cancellation emphasizes the importance of a statement issued by the Authors League at the time of the Hearings. In the past, the statement says, 'censorship commonly operated only against a work produced and issued to the public and only against one work at a time, with the author being afforded the opportunity of refuting the specific accusations in a court of law.' But the new censorship runs not against the work but against the man. For the motion picture industry has now made it painfully clear that the anti-Communist hiring policy applies not merely to the employment of certain writers but to the entire work





of these writers, past, present, and future, regardless of content or subject matter." And so this was the extension of the blacklist to all original work written by the ten men, and later this applied, of course, to everyone else who was blacklisted.

There was a protest meeting organized by the Hollywood Ten at the El Patio Theatre in Hollywood on March 25. The chairman of the meeting was Stephen Fritchman of the Unitarian church, and the speakers were Carey McWilliams, Bob Kenny, Karen Morley, and myself. There was also a dramatization of the novel by Arthur Laurents with Will Geer playing the leading role. And the dramatization was done as though it were a radio drama, around a microphone. My talk had the title (in the small book I later published called The Citizen Writer) of "The Anti-American Conspiracy," and I want to read a few remarks from it. I said: "For this is the purpose behind the blacklist of a university professor or of ten men of Hollywood, of forty postal employees or eighteen county workers or a dozen scientists. The purpose is the regimentation of all professors and all government workers and all film artists. One is destroyed in order that a thousand will be rendered silent and impotent by fear. Through fear and hysteria Americans are to be induced to give up their rights as free citizens." Less than a month later the [Arts, Sciences, and



Professions Committee] had a meeting at Carnegie Hall in New York to launch a new cultural center. The chairmen were John Martin, the dance critic of the New York Times, Arthur Miller, and Clifford Odets. And Joseph Bromberg, the actor, redirected the dramatization of McKeever written by Laurents and did it in the form of a regular play. I was not present. They also did a short work, "I've Got the Tune," by Marc Blitzstein. I might pause to remark that Joe Bromberg was a man I knew cordially although not intimately, who happened to be the man to teach me how to play chess, and his son Conrad used to play ball with me at Roxbury Park. And Marc Blitzstein, I will take the opportunity now to say, was a very dear friend when I lived in New York and someone I cherished. He was talented and was a most engaging man personally, with a tragic emotional problem. When I met him he was married, and his wife died within a few years of that time. And Marc even then was, I believe, a homosexual, and he seemed to have a compulsion to go down to the Brooklyn Navy Yard and pick up sailors. And the last time I saw him, he was staying for a while in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and we had a very fond reunion. And then in the early sixties, I believe--in the mid-sixties he was beaten to death, I think in the Virgin Islands, by several sailors. And I've always tried to change my thoughts when I . . .



when the image comes of that sensitive, marvelous man . . . just being bludgeoned to death.

GARDNER: He, too, suffered from the . . .

MALTZ: . . . the blacklist?

GARDNER: . . . the blacklist, didn't he?

MALTZ: Marc? No, I don't think Marc was blacklisted, no. Well, I don't know.

GARDNER: Because it seems to me the volume of his work really was not significant after the late forties, and suddenly he was revived again in the sixties.

MALTZ: No, no, that's not right. Because now I remember it was during the blacklist era that he had long, a very long-running version of The Threepenny Opera for which he had done the translation.

GARDNER: Oh, I wasn't aware of that.

MALTZ: . . . and he had done the lyrics; it played in New York. And Marc was not blacklisted. He was just such a lovely person. And it's so tragic that he had this compulsion.

McKeever was then published, and it had, interestingly and significantly, about half the reviews in the country that The Cross and the Arrow had had. I made a mistake in deciding to list, in addition to other work published, the films that I had worked on because this was a clue for various reviewers to say that of course I had written



the book with Hollywood in mind; and with that disparaging comment, they tossed the book aside. However, it had quite a number of quite good reviews. In the New York Times the review by William Du Bois said, "In a tightly plotted short novel Mr. Maltz achieves an effect all too rare in current fiction, an affirmation of faith in man's courage, man's will to put things right in a badly off-center world." The Sunday New York Herald Tribune, with the critic being Milton Rugoff: "Albert Maltz has once again attempted to fuse a fine talent for storytelling with an urgent sense of our social problems. It is an attempt illuminated from time to time by vivid characterization and by the author's faith in the underlying kindness of the average man. But as a story it strains credibility and as a message is forced. Mr. Maltz's narrative would seem to have much more of what we call plot and suspense. Like so many other novels that are Hollywood bound, it achieves these at the expense of plausibility. The Journey of Simon McKeever's clearly constructed with much good brick and some fine wide windows, but the foundation is one of those illusions in which movie cameras are expert." And it was precisely because--and it was also because there had been all the publicity about its being purchased by Fox that they said this. The daily New York Herald Tribune, with Lewis Gannett reviewing it, said: "Albert Maltz's short novel is the





Pilgrim's Progress of this old man, a discerning and humorous legend of old age in our time that somehow just misses shining success. For all its weakness, this is an appealing and heartwarming story of the essential dignity of an American." And finally, in the New Republic, Richard Gehman said: "Yet because some people say that Mr. Maltz is guilty of something or other, I find it impossible to disassociate this word from his name. I find him guilty in this book, for example, of believing that people are for the most part good hearted, that life in the main is not all bad. I find him guilty of saying that some men make mistakes in their life and regret them later, that some men are forced by circumstances into situations they find distasteful; but upon finding themselves in these situations, they can adjust. I find him guilty of expressing the thought that a man's work may be so precious to him that he does not want to quit it, that a man can get sincere pleasure and satisfaction from serving others. Worse yet, I find Mr. Maltz guilty of having written a book . . . [tape recorder turned off] . . . that is altogether human: a little too slick in some spots, a little too rough in others, a book that is, like most human beings, interesting clear through."

McKeever was finally published in ten countries, which is the smallest foreign publication of my first three novels.



And interestingly, it was published primarily in the Western countries; only two socialist countries issued it. I have no explanation for that. The Commonwealth Club in California gives a prize for literature--I don't know whether every year or every several years or when--but this got a silver medal for that year for literature. And as I learned from some insiders, it was a final contestant for National Book Award in the first time that that award had been given. It was won by a man with whom I was friendly, Nelson Algren, for his very good book, The Man with the Golden Arm.

GARDNER: What's your own feeling toward the book?

MALTZ: Toward McKeever?

GARDNER: You're very fond of it, aren't you?

MALTZ: Yes, I'm fond of it. I think that on the whole it's a very good book, or it's a good novel. I do feel, now that I wrote a screenplay on it and had to examine its tissues very carefully with the director, that there is an aspect of it which was not clearly thought out, rather muddy thinking, and that had to do with McKeever's dreams. Because there was no way of translating them into the screenplay, and some of that had to do with the difference in form, but some of it had to do with the original writing in the novel. So I would say it's flawed, but I do like it.



In March '49 the Arts, Sciences, and Professions Committee had a large peace conference in New York at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. It was attacked and sabotaged by the government and by a group of intellectuals led by Dwight MacDonald, Mary McCarthy, and Sidney Hook, who used the opportunity to say, quite truthfully, that there were no civil liberties in the Soviet Union. Of course there were not, but what that had to do with being against a peace conference was never satisfactorily explained. There is a very excellent short summation of what happened in the Belfrage book, pages 95-99, and, without reading them, I just want to give one little quote. He says that "the combined efforts of federal and local probers, blacklisters, familiars and free-world intellectuals would see to it that no such gathering occurred again until the third year of America's war in Vietnam. Presence at the Waldorf Astoria in March 1949 became almost as black a mark in a dossier as presence in the wrong part of Spain between 1936 and 1938."

In April or May of that year I had an interlude of about one week which was very charming. Burt Lancaster's manager, Harold Hecht, whom I had known, came to me and said that Lancaster, with his former circus partner, a man by the name of Nick Cravat, were going to join a circus in the Midwest for several weeks for publicity purposes.



Lancaster and Cravat had for some years before World War II been partners and had played in circuses and in nightclub acts. And after the war Lancaster quite quickly became-- was cast in a play in New York and from that play came to the film industry. And Nick Cravat came along and used to work out with Lancaster, who was always concerned about keeping up his physical condition. They used to run together in the morning and so on. And Hecht asked if I wanted to go along with them to the circus and see if I could come up with a film story based on the circus. I was free and able to do it, and I was delighted to do it because I'd always been a circus buff.

And so I joined them in Indiana in some small town and traveled with them and with the circus for a week. It was an absolutely fascinating week for me, and I came back and wrote out a great many pages of notes about it. And I came back with two short stories that I wrote, but I was never able to find a satisfactory film story. One of the short stories was "Circus Come to Town," which is in my second volume of short stories, and the other was never published as a story, but in the early sixties it sold under the name of Julian Silva (which was a pseudonym I was using at the time) to a TV show--sold to a network. And it became--maybe not to a network but to some program--and it became a TV show in which Cornel Wilde





appeared and was called "The Great Alberti." I never saw it, and I never knew on what program it appeared.

In May I began to work on "Circus Come to Town," and around this time I also began work on something that occupied a good deal of my time and also took a great deal of my money, and that was the amicus curiae campaign.

As we started to approach the Supreme Court, our lawyers had spoken of the desirability of our getting friend-of-the-court briefs from organizations such as the Civil Liberties Union and others, and as I inquired about it, I learned that it would be considered of great value if we could get a great many briefs. And so, with the agreement of the others, I sort of went off on my own and worked with Pauline Lauber Finn on developing an amicus curiae campaign. I seem to recall that we worked out a form of suggested brief that organizations could use if they wished, and Pauline was the one who got addresses and got the letters done, and we circulated a great many organizations. I don't know whether--I must. . . . Yes, I believe that later I will tell what happened as a result of this campaign. If I don't, I hope you will remind me.

GARDNER: Okay, I will.

MALTZ: In the middle of June, the convictions of Lawson and Trumbo were confirmed by the appellate court, and so we were on our way to the Supreme Court. And at that time



Dmytryk and Lardner were ordered home--I think Lardner may have been home already--were ordered home by the Justice Department. At the end of June my records tell me that I went to New York--oh, yes . . . no, this was in my book, in my little, small book--went to New York for a Madison Square Garden rally that was sponsored by the Civil Rights Congress. Paul Robeson spoke, and several of the Communist leaders, who were already sentenced to jail, spoke. And the title of my talk was "Books Are On Trial in America," and I want to read some small portions of that. I began it by saying:

On October 27, 1553, a man was burned at the stake in the city of Geneva, Switzerland. His name was Michael Servetus, he was a mathematician, a physician, and a student of theology. He was burned because he had written a small book on Christian doctrine called On the Errors of the Trinity. It was a book that expressed for the first time the creed now known as Unitarianism. And when Servetus was tied to the stake, the book he had written was chained to his body; book and man burned together. We Americans have reason to ponder this today.

I went on to say:

It is easier to understand the events of the past than the confused turmoil of the present. It is a bitter thing for our nation, I believe, that so many people do not know that today in the city of New York other books are in the process of being banned for a similar purpose. Point number nine of the indictment against the Communist party leaders in their current trial says this: "It was further a part of said conspiracy that said defendants would publish and circulate, and cause to be published and circulated, books, articles, magazines, and newspapers advocating the principles of Marxism-



Leninism." Here is a volume of literature, some of which has been in existence for a hundred years and has been circulating in this nation for that length of time. If the principles of Marxism advocate the violent overthrow of the U.S. government as alleged, why has it taken a hundred years to discover it? Furthermore, the Smith Act, under which the indictment against these books was brought, was passed in 1940. In view of the number of informers who have allegedly been reporting steadily to the FBI that the books and the Communist leaders did indeed advocate force and violence, why did it take eight years to draw up a two-page indictment? It did not take eight years. And it is not the Communist party alone that is on trial in New York today. Surely one need not be a believer in the principles of Marxism to recognize what it means to America when books are put on trial.

That summer, as soon as I got back from the meeting in New York, I took my oldest child, Peter, who was now almost twelve, to a camp near Seattle that had been especially recommended to us. He had just entered junior high, and although he had been moderately competent in his work in elementary school, he suddenly began failing in junior high. He didn't at the time tell us, but we learned later that he sat in his classroom in the new school feeling that the teachers were looking at him with accusing eyes because of his father. And we felt that if we could take him out of the inevitable heat of his home environment, because of the case, and put him where things would be more comfortable for several



months, it would be good for him. And this was a camp in which there was no rigid schedule, and he would be in the woods with an opportunity to fish, which he loved to do. He was frightened of going away by himself, but I told him that I would put him in the camp and stay in the vicinity for one week, and if at any time he wanted to quit, I would take him home; but that if he liked it for a week and wanted to stay, then he could. And he found he liked it; so I left him there.

It was later in the summer that the two youngest justices of the Supreme Court, and the two most liberal, [Frank] Murphy and [Wiley] Rutledge, both died within one month of each other. I felt then that our case was lost and that we would be going to jail. That was the first time I had believed that we would lose.

My records tell me that I spent two weeks in the East in September on some business for the Ten, and I no longer recall the purpose of it, but it might have been the search for a very celebrated attorney to argue our case before the Supreme Court. I do know that I had a meeting with Telford Taylor and the associates of his law firm about the case. Taylor had been the chief U.S. prosecutor at the Nuremburg trials and was very good on civil liberties. I know that I had an exchange of correspondence with Zechariah Chafee of Harvard, and that I was in touch





with Professor [Walter] Gellhorn of the law faculty of Columbia University (a brother of Martha Gellhorn) and with Professor [Thomas] Emerson of Yale University. But nothing came of our efforts. I no longer really remember why.

Toward the end of September 1949 Truman announced that the Soviet Union had detonated an atomic weapon. I have read not too long ago that this moment was really the start of the Rosenberg case because it is said that J. Edgar Hoover's reaction to this announcement was to leap to his feet and say, "Who gave them the secret of the atomic bomb?" Apparently, Hoover, like many Americans, was under the illusion that there were some special secrets to the atomic bomb and that if these were conveyed to the scientists of another country, they would be able to make the bomb, and without it they could not. Now this was a piece of ignorance contrary to the open statements of many scientists that there was nothing about the making of the bomb that physicists in other countries could not understand, that the only problems in making it were engineering problems. But from that point began, apparently, the FBI hunt to either find, or to manufacture a case against, those who allegedly had stolen the American atom bomb "secrets."

Some time during this period, in spite of my preoccupation with problems of our case, I got a call from



Edward G. Robinson asking me if I wouldn't write another speech for him because he had had a visit to Israel, and he was very excited about the country, and he was going to go on a tour to sell Israeli bonds, and he needed a speech. I found it very interesting to learn that he had been turned down by a number of others, because I asked him if he wouldn't go to others, including my old friend Michael Blankfort, who had also visited Israel and had become very pro-Israeli. (I might mention that Michael Blankfort had not been active in supporting the case of the Ten in the way that I would have assumed he would be. And I had not gone to the mat with him about it because of reasons that I have since forgotten.)

In any instance, I went to Robinson's home, and he gave me various pieces of data that he wanted to include, and I wrote his speech for him. It was somewhere along in this period, I think, that Warner Brothers rereleased the film Destination Tokyo on Hollywood Boulevard, and we picketed the film and put out a leaflet asking people to contribute funds to the Ten and write protests and so on.

GARDNER: The tape is just about out. Shall we quit for now?

MALTZ: Yes.



TAPE NUMBER: XIX, SIDE TWO

DECEMBER 18, 1978

GARDNER: And we return to the case of the Ten.

MALTZ: Yes, just a correction of a detail. The speech on Israel that I wrote for Edward G. Robinson was in March 1950 and not in 1949.

The amicus curiae campaign, which I had worked on and financed, produced briefs by a great many organizations representing some 20 million people. As a result of it, the Supreme Court changed its rules about such briefs. The rules now are that briefs--that they must give permission for briefs before they can be filed, and that had not been the procedure before that.

I think that all in all we probably raised about \$260,000 for our case in the two and a half years from the time that we were first held in contempt. Not a little of this came from Hollywood people, some of whom, of course, were able to anonymously give donations of 1,000 or more dollars, as Burt Lancaster did. And that was used to support our whole public campaign and to pay all of the very expensive legal costs. I had not mentioned one notable piece of writing which Trumbo did, and that was his marvelous pamphlet Time of the Toad, which we circulated very widely.



In the year 1949 there was a considerable amount of reprinting of my work abroad, and two anthologies appeared in the United States with my stories. Those had gone into the works before the blacklist. With the exception of those two stories that could not be omitted from retrospective anthologies like the O'Henry Memorial Award Stories from 1915 to 1950, that kind of thing, no story of mine was printed in an anthology in the United States for the next thirteen years. My income in '49 was large, just under \$70,000. Half of that was the film sale of McKeever, and almost another half were sums from Naked City and the unnamed film I've been referring to. The balance was royalties from The Cross and the Arrow.

The political scene in 1950 began with the second Hiss trial in January, and he was convicted this time and received four years in prison. And when I come in this narrative up to 1978, I will talk about Hiss again because I am in contact with him, and he now has the data proving his innocence. Perhaps I ought to amend that: it would not so much prove his innocence as prove that he had been convicted with tainted evidence used by the government.

In February an event occurred which was very serious and had a terrible effect. I'm reading now from a chronology of events in John Wexley's The Judgment of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in the edition that was put





out in 1977: "Dr. Klaus Fuchs, German-born British nuclear physicist, arrested in England on the basis of a voluntary confession that he had transmitted atomic information to the Soviet Union . . . Fuchs tried and sentenced to fourteen years" in prison. Now, the seriousness of that was not that one individual had betrayed his trust and provided the Soviet Union with some useful information as that it laid the basis for wild charges that were made after that about atomic espionage as the source of the Soviet Union's ability to manufacture atomic weapons. Despite the assertions by scientists everywhere that not only did the Soviet Union but many other countries have the ability to make such weapons, and certainly the theoretical knowledge, the Klaus Fuchs incident was the basis for a public belief which the government built on to the contrary. Early 1950 also saw the emergence of Senator McCarthy on the public scene and his particular style, which was much more aggressive and flamboyant than that of any other of the witch-hunters.

    In April the Supreme Court refused to hear our case. Now, legally, this did not mean that they had ruled on our case or on its issues, it had merely decided not to hear it at that time. Therefore, the decision of the appellate courts stood and we had lost. As I said earlier, if the two justices who had died in the summer of 1949 had lived,



I think the outcome would have been quite different. And if we had won our case, there would not have been the so-called McCarthy years. Because all of the committees of Congress--that is to say, aside from the House Committee on Un-American Activities, there were the McCarran Committee on Internal Security [Internal Security Subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee--SISS], and McCarthy's committee [Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Senate Committee on Government Operations], whose name I forget for the moment, and all of them depended upon the same ability of summoning people before them, asking them questions about their political lives, and then getting them blacklisted. So that if we had won, that could not have taken place. Certainly it would not have ended the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union, but it might have--I think it would definitely have made an enormous difference in the domestic scene.

It is relevant to mention here that at no time had Edward Dmytryk been as militant in attacking the committee, and in defending our position, as he was in the period of six weeks between the announcement of the Supreme Court turndown and our going to jail. Actually, it was eight weeks. When we held a press conference, Dmytryk was in the forefront, speaking out boldly and strongly. And he was very active in that period. I mention this, of course, because of his subsequent positions.



Our attorneys made use of what the law permitted in asking the Supreme Court for a rehearing. They didn't actually expect the court to provide one, but their attitude was, why not delay for six weeks--which was the period allotted--delay your going into prison? You never know what can happen, and it will give you time, anyway, to arrange your personal affairs. I just mention in passing, as the kind of thing that individuals faced, that when my daughter, aged seven and a half, was told that I would be going into prison, she looked at me with startled eyes and then asked if I would have to be naked in prison. Where she had gotten this concept I don't know, but it's the kind of thing that I'm sure happened in different ways to the other men. She went out shortly after asking that question, and my wife and I continued to talk with our son. Then, after a little bit, we heard a noise in the hallway, and then Kathy appeared with some sort of makeshift costume on, leading some other girls more or less the same age, and in an effort to cheer me up, came in singing "Here Comes the Bride." [laughter]

I suppose it's not an irrelevant footnote to say that I had a particular anxiety based upon what had gone on during the thirties in certain jails and prisons where Communists were beaten by other prisoners who had been urged on to that by the guards. And at this time to be going



into prison was to be going into enemy country, and so I took a crash course in judo, going every day, practically, for the six weeks. Since I had a background of boxing and wrestling, I came out feeling equipped, not certainly to take on a cell full of men, but one or another individual if that happened. I'm glad to say that nothing actually did happen in prison, although on two occasions there were men who began to get ugly with me, and in each case a man as big as a tree trunk, and I played it very quietly and they didn't do anything actually violent. But it made a considerable difference in my inner feelings to know that I would have been able to handle them.

GARDNER: Were these fights--they were averted?

MALTZ: Yes.

GARDNER: Were they political?

MALTZ: Yes. There was-- I'll mention it now, I'll come to it--there was practically no politics which came into jail life excepting for these two men--because most of the men in jail just didn't have any politics; they weren't concerned. But these two men did, and I imagine that they were trying to provoke me into doing something violent to them because it is very important in prison that if a fight occurs, the question is who started it. A man has a right to defend himself. And they wanted to be in the position of defending themselves, I suppose, and that's why they didn't go further.





GARDNER: For a writer who always sought out various situations and scenes as background material for writing, and also for the nature of speech and different kinds of speech, did you find yourself, at least in part, excited by the opportunity to get into this other world?

MALTZ: I'll mention that when I come to it. Because you're quite right, it's very interesting just to be in jail . . . for a while. [laughter]

In the six-week period while our rehearsing was being decided upon by the Supreme Court, I largely wrote, with some changes by Herbert Biberman and the ten of us made, a one-reel film called The Hollywood Ten. It was directed by John Berry and narrated by Gale Sondergaard. And I want to mention that because I went to Mexico after jail and because of other events, I never saw the film, the completed film, until 1974, I think it was, and I was impressed by the degree to which it held up. The assertions that we made stood the test of time and of later events.

I remember a small incident which is interesting. Somehow, a luncheon was arranged with a Polish Communist who was in the United States, I don't remember his name, and perhaps three or four of us in the Ten were present. One of them was Dmytryk. And the only thing that I remember from the conversation is that the Pole said, in an effort to encourage us, or as a dry jest, "Your first term in prison is always the hardest." And I remember



Dmytryk gasping aloud at that. [laughter] There was a great difference between men like ourselves and a guy who had worked in the Polish underground under [Joseph] Pilsudski. It was all the difference between. . . . Well, there was a polar difference.

As soon as the sixth week was over, Jack Lawson and Trumbo had to surrender in Washington, and they left at once. There was a big demonstration in Grand Central Station in New York (I guess they had gone by train) where they were hoisted onto the shoulders of members of the crowd and carried out. But a week later we had to report in Washington for formal trials, the outcome of which was already decided by our signatures but nevertheless had to be held. Just before I left, I got a warm supportive note from Nelson Algren, who, without my knowing it at the time, had served some jail time for robbery when-- Oh, not a robbery, not for robbery, no, no, no, no . . . for theft when he was a young man, and actually it had been a theft of a typewriter so he could do some writing.

[laughter] And he said something about being sure that I could do the year sleeping on my ear, which was a jail term, and I was very appreciative.

There was a--oh, yes, there was a final rally under the auspices of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions [Committee] to raise funds for our case. I might say that several of



the Ten were absolutely indigent, and in one case there was a child to support as well as a wife in the other case, and so we tried to raise funds for them. And two speeches were made at the rally which were subsequently published in a pamphlet, one by Gale Sondergaard and the other by myself, and the title of the two was "On the Eve of Prison." I want to read a short part of the talk I made. I said:

If we go to prison [still putting an if on it], I for one will go with a deeper anger than I have ever felt in my life. What is the substance of that anger? For myself and my colleagues, our families, our work, our lives--yes, of course. But even more because I abominate the manner in which our land is now being befouled by the men in charge of the machinery of government. You will notice here that I do not limit my charge. When this case began in the fall of 1947, I did that as did others. I pointed to the evil actions of certain committees like the Un-American Activities Committee, to certain individuals like J. Parnell Thomas, [John E.] Rankin, Attorney General Clark. But many things have happened in our land in two and a half years, bad things. And today it would be blindness to view such events as the work of a few individuals alone or a few reactionary committees of Congress. On the contrary, the time has come when it must be admitted that what is at work here is the total machinery of our men of government on a policy level and on an executive level.

And I must say that in the years that have passed, looking back upon it and reading materials about it, I consider that that was a completely accurate statement.



During the six-week period, I went to Edward G. Robinson to ask for money for the two women and one child who needed it, and he told me that he didn't think he could manage it. He had just given a loan to one of the men, and I had no doubt that he had; I could almost guess to whom he had given it. But here he was in a house choked with very valuable paintings, and he knew he was going to work immediately, and he could have done a little more, I'm sure. And I didn't feel too good about it, but there was nothing to say.

It was a small pleasure to me, but only a small one, that I signed twelve contracts for books to be published abroad--that is, foreign editions for my wife to take care of mailing. And at the airport a farewell had been organized. I don't know how many people were there--as I think back, it was anywhere around 5,000--to say farewell to us, and we took a night plane.

GARDNER: Was that all ten of you?

MALTZ: No, that was actually seven of us. Lawson and Trumbo were already in jail. Adrian Scott was ill and did not come into jail until, I think, a couple of months after we went in so it was the . . .

GARDNER: . . . seven who remained.

MALTZ: . . . seven who remained. In New York we stopped overnight and there was a meeting at a midtown hall--





Town Hall, I think it was--in which Paul Robeson was a featured speaker. And on my way to the hall, I met an old and very dear friend whose wife was already in prison. This was Bernhard Stern, a sociologist whom I had known since the early thirties. He taught at Columbia University, and he had been blacklisted, actually, since about the year, ah, 19-- . . . . I think it was around 1919. Because at that time he had been an instructor in the University of Washington, and he had given his support publicly to, I think, some IWW strikers, or some others in some labor struggle in the Northwest. And he was fired for his radical activities from the University of Washington and never again in his life did he ever get tenure at any university. For years he taught at Columbia University in extension, where what he earned was based upon the number of students he had. And since he was an immensely popular lecturer, he got along all right. At a certain period he was a visiting professor of sociology at Yale for a couple of years, but never got tenure. He published enormously. And his record of getting grants was a terrific one, but he, to one degree or another, was blacklisted. His wife, Charlotte, was one of the members of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, and so she was in the women's prison at Alderson, Virginia--Alderson, West Virginia, on a three-month sentence, and I remember



his telling me that it was quite hard for her. And that makes me recall that, in some ways, you can never predict how given individuals will react to situations that are completely new to him. For instance, one of the members of this committee who was a hard-bitten trade unionist apparently could not take jail, and I was told that he cried every night that he was in jail. It was very surprising to me, but that's the complexity of human nature.

We then went immediately to Washington, and then after going into the courtroom at once, we found that there was going to be a delay in our sentencing for one week. I no longer recall what the reason was, whether a given judge was not in town, or--I've forgotten entirely. But while all of the men except Herbert Biberman and myself went back to New York to see friends and theater or whatnot, Herbert and I decided to stay in Washington. And this was, for me, an absolutely wonderful stay.

One of the first things we did was to take a trip to Mount Vernon, which neither of us had seen. And that was the beginning of the enormous respect that I've had all down the years for George Washington. Previous to that visit I, like a good many others, had read somewhat disparaging comments about Washington, especially in comparison to an intellect like Jefferson. But there were two things in Mount Vernon that set me to thinking



very hard. Above a doorway, right where a stairway led to the second floor, there was the key to the Bastille which had been sent to Washington by Lafayette. Now one has to ask-- I immediately asked myself, and spoke to Herbert about it, saying, why would Lafayette send that key to Washington? Why not to Jefferson or Franklin, or why not to someone else somewhere in the world? Why did he pick Washington? And it was at once clear that Washington, who had been the head of the American Revolutionary army and its first president, stood in the mind of Lafayette and others in Europe as the leading force for liberty in the world, the liberty that they wanted. And this impressed me tremendously.

And then came something else in the small museum that is on Mount Vernon to house various of Washington's effects such as--I remember some dental tools that he had, eyeglasses and so on. From some letters on the wall it became clear that when he went away from Mount Vernon he left a nephew in charge of it. Now, in the first place, Washington was one of the most wealthy men in the colonies. But he was away from Mount Vernon, except, I think, for perhaps one very brief return of a few days, for eight years, living often in unpleasant conditions. Certainly he had put his life on the line when he accepted the post he did. As a wealthy man he could have sat out the war as



many in the colonies did. So one had, first of all, the realization that here was a man of principle and a man of courage who had an alternate path in the Revolution and had not taken it. And in the letter exchange, the nephew wrote to George Washington and told him that a British fleet had come up the Potomac and had anchored just outside the plantation and had demanded stores of food and other items with the threat that if they didn't get them, they would burn down the plantation. And the nephew said that he gave them the stores, and the plantation was intact, and that he hoped his uncle would approve. And Washington wrote back that he should have let them burn it down. Now, the man who wrote that was in my opinion one hell of a human being.

GARDNER: Right. [laughter]

MALTZ: I began afterwards to read about Washington, and I now have in my possession the two-volume history, biography of him by [James Thomas] Flexner, and in the added reading that I've done in that, I've found no reason to change my mind. He was, I think, a most extraordinary man and did things I won't go into now in military strategy that were very fine.

It's, by the way, one of the things that has troubled me about the writing, or some of the writing, that Howard Fast has done. Because, although he is a writer with an





immense narrative gift, I saw in one of his two books about Washington (I forget which name it is, what the title of the one is I'm talking about) a willingness to absolutely pervert history in order to achieve an effect. In this story he portrays Washington as a gentleman farmer who knew nothing about war and therefore committed blunder after blunder until, gradually and painfully, he learned how to be a commander. Well, that just isn't true. Washington was not just a gentleman farmer; he was one of several officers who had had maximum military experience in the French and Indian Wars. And to present him in that way was just utterly false. He was not chosen at random by the members of the revolutionary committee (I forget the name of it).

Subsequently, Herbert and I went to the Jefferson and Lincoln memorials, which are so enormously impressive, and we went to the home of Frederick Douglass, which was very hard to find because it was not in any way an official museum and was scarcely taken care of. But it was enormously exciting to see his home and to be able to sit down in his chair at his desk, as I did, and to put on his half-spectacles, which were still there, and to open the drawers and see his account books of what he spent for coal and food, because he was a man whom I enormously admired. Actually, I hope the notebooks and the spectacles



are still there, because we could have walked off with them if we had wanted to. And in the course of. . . .

GARDNER: Your [tape] just ran out.

MALTZ: Oh, thank you. [tape recorder turned off] In the course of walking around Washington and seeing other such monuments--the statue of [Tadeuz] Kosciuszko, for instance--I felt that even though it was the Establishment in this Washington that was sending us to prison, that we were in contact in our spirits with the other Washington, with the Washington that did stand for liberty. And I felt that we were connected to the newspaper editors who had gone to jail in the Alien and Sedition period, and to Abraham Lincoln when he opposed the Mexican War as a representative in Congress, and to the abolitionists who had defied the Dred Scott decision. And so it was a very healthy and warming week for me, I know.

I want to mention that during that week I saw I. F. Stone and his wife a number of times. They were old friends of mine whom I had not seen during my time in Los Angeles. And then an odd thing happened. At 7:30 one morning, when I was very sound asleep, there was a hard knocking at my hotel door. I stumbled to open it, and it was Iz Stone, who had been up all night watching a ticker tape on the invasion of South Korea by North Korea and who was so enormously disturbed that he needed to talk right



away and had come to talk about it with me. Stone had been very much a part of the peace movement and of the Stockholm Peace Petition, and he felt that this action on the part of North Korea, which must have been directed from Moscow, was a horrible blow at the world peace movement, and he was just deeply, deeply upset. And that was the beginning of a period of thought which caused Stone to go abroad with his family for a year so that he could have access to the newspapers of France and England and other countries. And it resulted in a book, The Hidden History of the Korean War, in which he came to a conclusion that was just the opposite of the one he had had when he awakened me: namely, that the war had really been prepared by the United States, with Dulles as its chief stage manager, and that the North Koreans had fallen into a trap in invading.

The night before our appearance in court, which resulted in our going right into jail, there was an interesting meeting, a kind of symbolic meeting of the executive board of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions [Committee]. Harlow Shapley came down for it, and there were several of us from the Ten who were on the board, and some others had come from New York. When the meeting was over, we sat around having some drinks and Shapley talked about astronomical matters. He was noted for his contribution to understanding of nebulae, I believe, and I've been told that he was one of



the most important astronomers since Copernicus. But it was fascinating to get away from our small problems and to look at the world and the universe through the perspective of an astronomer talking of the millions of light years and the fact that conditions for life surely existed on many other planets besides our own.

The next day in the court we were tried before three judges in three separate courtrooms. Each of us made a statement before sentencing which we had prepared, and I waited with considerable anxiety for my sentence, because, not yet knowing what any of the other men had received, I knew that theoretically it was possible that we would get two years because there were two counts against us.

GARDNER: What had Lawson and Trumbo gotten?

MALTZ: They had gotten a year, but I still felt it was possible that a given other judge would feel differently. But I got a year also, and the sentence was immediately carried out--that is, we were taken downstairs to the same place where we had been fingerprinted at the beginning of the case. But now we were put into a large room which traditionally is called the bullpen and where there were benches circling the room (or not circling, because it was a quadrangular room) and where there were other men who were being held to be taken back to the Washington jail. It was marvelous to have Herbert Biberman and Dmytryk





come down because they had been sentenced before another judge, and he had given them only six months. And that was, of course, exciting. We were in the bullpen for quite some hours. What we didn't know, but found out, was that every court morning the bus brought inmates from the Washington jail to the courthouse because they were up for trial or sentencing or some kind of hearing, and the bus did not return to take them back until the court day was over. And the men who had come from jail had come with some sandwiches which had been given them, but we had not been given anything and so we had no lunch.

GARDNER: The tape's about to end. Why don't we stop here?

MALTZ: All right.



TAPE NUMBER: XX, SIDE ONE

DECEMBER 18, 1978

MALTZ: Of course, for me, the hours in the bullpen involved natural concern and anxiety about the way prison would be, about the way the jail would be for me. But also an anxiety that I had--perhaps the other men didn't have it the same way--was that if the McCarran Act were passed, I might go from prison to a concentration camp. And this fear never left me during the time I was in prison, but it only increased because the McCarran Act was passed.

GARDNER: Could you explain why you felt that it would place you in a concentration camp?

MALTZ: Well, yes, the McCarran Act (without my now looking it up) had provisions for the arbitrary detention by executive order of the president of individuals thought to be dangerous to the government in a crisis that the president would decide. And even before the act was passed, the government began to build concentration camps, and this was publicized. So that, in that atmosphere, there was no reason to doubt that if such an executive order were made, that I would be one of those who would be put into a camp. And since, when we were going into prison, there was no chance to run as others might do and try to go underground or get into some other country.



It so happened by accident that Ring Lardner and I were handcuffed together in the walk from the bullpen through some long corridor to the prison bus, and we were photographed and that photograph appeared in Time magazine. I remember being asked later, perhaps it was on a visit by my wife, about how I felt about the "indignity" of being handcuffed. And I recall that I hadn't felt any indignity about it at all. That was routine, and I accepted it just as I was accepting the fact that I was going to be in jail. But, on the contrary, I felt that being handcuffed to Ring was a warm bond between him and myself. We were put into a bus such as one has seen with barred windows and taken to the jail, and there we were processed through taking off our clothes and showering. Then we had temporary jail clothes, some denims, because the next day we got our own clothes back, stinking from some disinfectant. And then we were moved through various barred doors until we came to the various cell blocks in which we were put. Only Lester Cole and I were finally in the same side of the same cell block, and we were on different floors.

I remember that when a cell door was opened-- When a barred door was opened for me to walk alone down to the cell where I was to enter--the cell I was told to enter-- it was a very strange time indeed, and I suppose a very lonely walk. I do recall very definitely that when I



entered the cell and the door closed with the loud percussive sound that happens in jails like that, I looked at the bars with a sense of shock and thought to myself, my God, I'm locked up and I'm going to be locked up here for a year. And that was a moment that had to be bridged. I might explain in passing that the cell block was a rectangle that was very tall because it had five tiers. On the first tier on the ground floor there were white inmates; on the second tier there were just several inmates waiting for execution--that was death row; the third tier were white inmates, and I was on that one; the fourth tier had black inmates; and the fifth tier was open, and it was where we had our daily exercise, with the exception of two days when we were out of doors. From what I've read, the jail is integrated now, but just how it is integrated I don't know . . . how the men are.

A quite--for me--anxious thing happened at my first meal. I had finished breakfast at 7:30 in the morning, and I believe that the evening meal in the jail was at about five o'clock, so that I was very hungry. And the rule in jail, in that jail, was that you had to-- You didn't have to take any more food than you wanted to as you passed the steam table with your tray, but what you took you had to eat. If you didn't eat everything on your tray, you were due for punishment. If you had taken an insufficient





amount, then the men who served passed during the meal with a tray with extras, and you could ask for more of this or that. Now, without any experience, I don't remember what the-- I do remember that there were beans that night and perhaps the usual beets and onions, and I asked for two pieces of bread. It was white bread. We sat down at tables and our only utensil was a spoon, and the rule at dinner--the rule at mealtime--was silence: no speaking whatsoever. I think the reason for that is that [of] better control of the inmates because if you have some inmates who are hostile and who are in separate tiers, they could meet at mealtime and begin to insult each other, and the result might be a physical fight. The minute I bit into the first piece of bread, I knew I was in trouble. I don't know how that bread was made, but never, before or since, have I encountered a piece of bread so heavy, so tasteless, so bulky. To merely finish one piece of bread with the other things on my tray would have been as much as I could possibly do, and I simply knew that I would not be able, without vomiting, to eat the second piece.

Now, we knew already, I guess from the bullpen, or perhaps from talking to my cellmate between the time I entered and dinner time, that the punishment for bad behavior was the hole, and the hole in that jail was a



dark cell with bread and water for a certain number of days. But most of all I was upset because we in the Ten had agreed that we would try to comport ourselves in prison so as not to give a bad name to left-wingers. There were going to be others who would follow us in, and we didn't want them to face hostile attitudes on the part of the administrators because we had made trouble. And so I thought, well, here I am, first thing off and I'm going to maybe go to the hole and get in trouble, and I was miserable because of it.

The whole eating time only took about twenty minutes, and I finally, looking around at the guards, whispered to my cellmate, who was sitting next to me, and said, "I took too much, what will I do?" And he said, "In your pocket". . . which should have occurred to me, I suppose, but didn't. And I then proceeded to break off pieces of the bread and get them into my pocket as I ate, and I think I got some beans into my pocket as well, but I was not observed, and I made it back to my cell, sweating, and got over that crisis. I use this in the novel I wrote about prison. (I would mention that Lawson and Trumbo were no longer there; they had already been shipped off to a penitentiary in Ashland, Kentucky.) The novel I mentioned, A Long Day in a Short Life, was set in this jail, but since the novel is not in most libraries, I'll describe just a few things



about the jail here and. . . . [tape recorder turned off]

The eighteen days that I spent in the Washington jail was very hard time, very difficult, and this was not because of any ill treatment on the part of the guards or any of the inmates. It was purely because the Washington jail was a holding jail for all different types of men charged, or declared guilty, of everything from the smallest misdemeanor to premeditated murder, and therefore it was very tight security. There was also, I think, perhaps a lack of enough guards for us to get out to the yard for exercise and so, including our mealtimes, we were only out of our small cells four hours out of every twenty-four. It was hot and humid at that time of year and, I imagine, cold in the winter. One perspired a great deal, but there were only two showers a week. And we who were transients were less fortunate on clothes than those who were there ready to be transferred to prisons because they had prison denims and were given changes twice a week. We had only our own clothes, which we were given back after the first day, and I remember washing out my socks and waiting for them to dry overnight and half the next day, and washing out underwear and so on. And we had no work; we used to envy those few inmates who were able to mop the floors because they had something to do. There were newspapers that did come in and were passed from cell to cell so that



one could read a newspaper, and a truck came from a so-called library once a week and you could order a book. I remember ordering books that I knew would be long, like Dumas's [Three] Musketeers, which I read for the first time in prison. And that one came, but on another week I ordered something and it didn't come; something else came. And there was a great lack of reading material. I borrowed everything I could because we passed things from cell to cell by extending our hands out. And it was tough for people who had been--tough for someone who had been active intellectually all his life to be deprived of the opportunity to do, to read, to think, and so on--well, you could think. [laughter]

I do want to pause to say that that jail was a luxury hotel compared to some of the jails in the United States--some, not only of the southern jails which one is aware of, but, for instance, the jails and some of the prisons in Pittsburgh, in Pennsylvania, which at that time were simply horrible.

GARDNER: Really. I wasn't aware of that.

MALTZ: Yes, I wasn't aware of it until I met a couple of inmates who came out of it. It was just hell. And certainly, compared to the concentration camps of, let's say, not the German concentration camps, which were killing camps, but those a little better, not designed





for mass murder at least, like the Soviet concentration camps, this was paradise. So I want to keep that perspective. The food. . . . I don't seem to have the list here. Now, just a second. [tape recorder turned off]

For someone like myself, who had eaten well, the food was bad but there was no question that it could keep one alive and, I imagine, had some nutritional balance. For instance, a breakfast was some fried potatoes, oatmeal, a little skim milk, white bread, a pat of apple butter, and a hot liquid that they called coffee. [laughter] There were beans, of course, at other meals, a nutritious food. I remember terrible powdered eggs. It was flat, but if you're hungry enough, then you eat. I remember flapjacks; they had flapjacks a number of times. And so it went.

I found that everything went very easy with the other inmates. I made no attempt to be with them anything other than I was, and I found there, as I did later in the prison camp, that inmates react on a very simple direct plane: if someone is agreeable they accept him; if someone is disagreeable they don't like him, and that's all there is to it. They did have a little problem in understanding what my crime was, because when I would say, "Well, I'm in for contempt of Congress," they would say, "What the hell is that?" [laughter] . . . having never heard of it before. And when I'd explain, someone might say, "Well, I'll be



goddamned. I never heard of anything like that." Someone else might say, "Well, good for you, I'm glad you didn't stool," or something of that sort. And very soon, with an awareness that I had education, one or another would come to me for help in preparing a petition for parole or some other such item.

I remember the first time, the first of the two times, we went to the yard. That was an occasion in which the seven of us could meet again because those from the other cell blocks would join us, and that was when I saw Herbert and Sam Ornitz, and so on. And that was a strange experience because now we were playing out a movie, as it were, because there were signs on the walls which said Stay Twenty Feet Away, and there were guards with guns watching us from the turret, and it was very strange to feel that we, who had never gone in for anything criminal, would be in that position. I remember a conversation with Dmytryk in which he said that he was glad to be here because he would be able to speak with pride to his grandchildren about what he had done in this period, and I mention that because of his later behavior, of course.

I had a very, very pleasant cellmate, a man who was a barber in civilian life but who was cursed with terrible alcoholism, but now in jail was most agreeable and did his best to pass time easily.



I think it was when I was only there for about a week that I got the idea of writing this novel that would be called A Long Day in a Short Life because each day stretched so long. And I by that time had been able to go to canteen, and since we had deposited some money, each of us was able to get pencil and writing-paper tablet, and so I started to make notes. In the course of the next ten, eleven days I made about seventy pages of notes about prison routine and about various of the men. There we had to learn, quickly, to write letters that we knew were going to be read by someone. It was forbidden to have any information in them about the jail so that you had to draw on other things in your life besides the immediacy of things around you.

I had one visit from one of my brothers while I was there, and this was strange because the visits in the Washington jail were of the porthole variety where you talked by telephone, and it was a new and strange experience. And there were two events that I subsequently used in my novel. One was the attempted suicide of a man who had just come in (but he had been in prison before). And the night he was committed to the Washington jail, he cut himself with something, and I remember the guard running down the tier to get to his cell and then, later, men coming with a stretcher, and I never learned what became of him.



And something else which was just enchanting. There was one night after lights were out when I saw, in the big range area beyond the tier runway, a firefly. How the firefly had gotten into the range was very odd, but in the dark cavern it floated up and down with its light winking on and off, and it was just amazing. I discovered that other men like myself were at the door watching it because it was somehow a symbol of absolute freedom there.

Around day fifteen of the time there, Herbert left and I heard on the grapevine that he was going to go, and I was watching for him to go. I might say that the grapevine is just a word for the fact that a prison is run in considerable part by the inmates taking direction from the officers. But if you have inmates in the administration office, they get to see certain lists, they hear certain things, and then they quickly pass down information because that's one of the pleasures of working in a job like that: you know something and you tell it to your fellow inmates. And so that was how I learned. I stood at the door of my cell waiting for him, and as he passed he looked over at my cell and there was just one second in which our eyes met, and we waved to each other and he went on. And then I, of course, was not to see him for a long time.

I knew that I could not take the notes I made for the novel out with me, and so I memorized the notes that I had





made, and when I was notified the night before I was to leave that I was due to go, I tore up the notes and flushed them down the toilet.

All of us, of course, could have been sent to prisons closer to our homes in Los Angeles, but I'm sure it was by design that we were, on the contrary, sent to places in the East. Ring Lardner and Lester Cole went to Danbury, Connecticut, where they met former Congressman J. Parnell Thomas, who was already there for stealing from the government. And Herbert Biberman and Alvah Bessie went to Texarkana, Texas. Samuel Ornitz, who had a large tumor on one side of his neck, was sent to Springfield, Missouri, which was the hospital prison in the federal prison system. When Adrian Scott came into prison later, he was sent to Ashland, where Lawson and Trumbo were, and where, while we were in prison, Dashiell Hammett was also sent. He went there because, as one of the officers of the committee . . . let me see . . . I'd have to get that. . . .

GARDNER: Well, we can check that.

MALTZ: All right. It was a committee on civil rights. Maybe it was just the Civil Rights Committee.\* He had been asked, along with Frederick Vanderbilt Field and Alphaeus Hunton, to deliver the names of the people who had put up bail money for individuals being defended by the committee, and they refused and so were sentenced for contempt and went to prison.

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\*Civil Rights Congress



Dmytryk was sent to Mill Point prison camp with me, and we went by car with two deputies. We left very early in the morning, and there was of course an absolutely marvelous feeling to be free of the walls after eighteen days and to be outside. And then a very amusing thing happened. The deputies got lost in all of the freeways around Washington, and Dmytryk said, "Look, I'm a pilot and I know how to read maps; maybe I can help you." And so they gave him the maps and indeed he did help them. And he not only got them out of Washington, but he directed them all the way to Mill Point. Now we were taken in--with normal security precautions, that is--Dmytryk and I were handcuffed together, and we also had a leg cuffs with a chain between us. But at a certain point the deputies stopped and went into a store and got us some sandwiches and some Coke bottles and drove on, and we could have hit them over the heads with the Coke bottles. And so much for their security arrangements. [laughter] But I imagine that they weren't very afraid of us . . . or afraid of our running, I mean.

The Mill Point prison camp was in the mountains of West Virginia in the east central part of the state. It was near a state park and a wilderness area, about seventy miles from Charleston, the capital of the state, and about fifty miles from the town of Gauley Bridge, where, sixteen years before, I had found material for my first



real short story, "Man on a Road." The Mill Point camp had been a former CCC camp. It consisted of an administration building, workshops, a hospital, a mess hall, and three barracks for men, and a quarantine building for new inmates. It was laid out quite attractively with a central walk that led from the administration building down to the mess hall and which was bordered in some sections with flowers. There were no bars, no walls, but there were signs around the perimeter of the camp which read Stay Inside. And if you went beyond those signs, then you were judged to be escaping and you would have a penalty for that. The atmosphere, however, in this prison camp was much more pleasant than that of penitentiaries, where the general attitude was that a guard was your enemy and that men seen talking with guards might be considered to be informers. Here the guards were trained for a situation in which men either had short terms or they were coming off long terms, and the prison system wanted to help them adjust to freedom. And so the guards had a more friendly and casual attitude with the men, conversation was possible as a normal part of prison behavior, and as long as men behaved, did their work, and obeyed orders, there was no problem at all.

There was a five-and-a-half-day work week. Some men worked in maintenance, that is to say, in cleaning the dorms,



in working in the kitchen and in the mess hall, and then others did outside work. There was a sawmill there, timber was cut, and the sawmill provided materials for building in other prisons. There was a farm on which vegetables were raised, a chicken house, and pigs and so on, and there was a strip coal-mine in which coal was cut.

The population varied from 280 in the summer to about 150 in the winter, when fewer men were needed because they didn't work the farm. One-third of the men were black so that they occupied one dormitory. Fifty percent of the men there were illiterate, and most of those were in for the making of illegal whiskey, moonshine. These were men, usually, from the mountain areas of Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, and the Carolinas. Some of them had never been more than ten miles away from the place they were born until they came to this prison. Some had never seen a shower bath before they came to the prison; they had never been to school; they had never voted; they had never used a handkerchief. It was astonishing to find this in the United States. And 60 percent of the men in the prison were in for whiskey, either making it or transporting it. The rest were in for petty and grand larceny, for arson, auto theft, transporting narcotics, hiking a check, forgery, passing counterfeit bills, Mann Act, mail fraud, income tax, but no one was there who





was a real professional criminal. And, basically, these men were farmers, they were miners, they were sawmill men, especially the whiskey men who might--a mine might close and they would have no way of making money and so they would fall back on what their forefathers had done, and make whiskey. A sawmill would cut up all the timber in an area and move away, and so they'd start to make whiskey, and that's how they came to be in prison.

We were able to receive as many letters from home as one's wife wrote, and I could write three letters a week, using one sheet of paper and writing on both sides of it. Similarly, one could not write anything about the prison. There were counts several times a day in which we had to be at our work place, and there were two counts at night. In addition to the pleasanter atmosphere than being in a walled prison, we had three days a month of extra good time. But the food was worse than it would be if we were in a larger prison because they didn't have the supplies or the money, so that I never saw an egg for six months, for instance, and what they called milk was blue from adulteration, and I knew from men who were transferred from Ashland that they ate much better there.

We did all sorts of work for a while in quarantine. Just let's stop for a moment. [tape recoder turned off] In quarantine we had a variety of work: cutting lawns



where the officers lived, working in the kitchen, helping a butcher, but mostly Dmytryk and I worked on a small dam in freezing water, and it was pleasant work in spite of the cold water. We could get out and warm up our hands and feet every twenty minutes or half an hour. But we were out of doors, and we both liked physical work, so it was okay. Then when we were assigned to permanent work, Dmytryk got work, a kind of bookkeeper's work, in the garage there which managed the trucks and cars of the camp, and I became hospital orderly and janitor, which is what it amounted to. The hospital there was a very pleasant one which had six beds plus an isolation room, and it had another room which was mine for sleeping. It had a clean dispensary, and I was extremely fortunate--and, oh, it had an office for the paramedical man, whom we called Doc.

GARDNER: Cleverly.

MALTZ: No, that was what everybody called him. He was "Mister," of course, but he was called Doc. It was extremely fortunate for me to have a private room instead of being in a dormitory with fifty other men. And it was especially valuable because in all free time the administration put on music which was piped into the barracks. Now, the music, two-thirds of the time, was soul music, because that's what the southern inmates wanted to hear--not soul music, it was country music . . .



GARDNER: Country music.

MALTZ: . . . which is what the southern inmates wanted to hear. And one-third of the time it was soul music, which was what the black inmates wanted to hear. This was by agreement between committees of both groups. Now, it happened that I abominated both types of music. As a matter of fact, the popular music of practically all countries, as soon as I get to know it, I begin to loathe it. [laughter] This is not a virtue on my part, it's just a statement of fact. And so I had the opportunity of turning off the music, the loudspeaker, in the hospital, and that meant so much to me that I can't--it's impossible to calculate how much it meant to me because otherwise I would have had to spend hours on Saturday afternoons and Sunday and evenings listening to music that I detested and, moreover, which was played over and over again because of a lack of a variety of records.

The doc had been in the merchant marine, where he was, I suppose, a medical orderly. I think he probably had received a little extra training, but he was limited to the dispensing of pills and of deciding which men needed a doctor's attention. If they needed doctor's attention, they were kept waiting, unless it was acute, for a doctor to come up from a town about twelve miles away, as he did perhaps every three weeks or longer, depending upon the



number of men who needed to be seen. If someone had a broken limb, as occurred, then he was taken to a hospital thirty miles away; the doctor did not set bones. Oh, he did more than dispense pills, of course. There were cuts and there were other injuries that he could treat. He had a lamp there for certain types of backaches and other such things.

And he, interestingly enough, did absolutely nothing to train me. When Saturday afternoon came, he went off to this town, Marlinton, twelve miles away and didn't come back till late Sunday night, and things could happen in that interval in which I was on duty. So I borrowed some books from him and studied first aid as intensely as I could, and would ask him questions which he would answer. But I think he was basically indifferent to the welfare of the men and so didn't want to take the trouble. He didn't want to get any marks against himself so that he did what he could if he was on duty; but if he wasn't on duty, then nobody could blame him.

My routine was as follows. I was up at 5:45 in the morning and dressed in whites to be the medical orderly. I put on a sterilizer in which there were some instruments in case he had to. . . .





TAPE NUMBER: XX, SIDE TWO

DECEMBER 18, 1978

MALTZ: I would then go down to the mess hall for breakfast, and if there was anybody in the hospital, which happened about, perhaps, 25 percent of the time, I would bring breakfast back to him in a special container that was provided for that.

The camp was up at about 6:30, awakened by loudspeaker into the various barracks, and almost invariably with the same call no matter what the weather was. It would be something like "Time to get up, it's a beautiful morning on Cranberry Hill." Cranberry Hill was the original name, apparently, of that area. Then at 7:15, as I recall, there was sick call in which. . . . By that time the doc would be there, and men would line up in a hallway and would be admitted one by one. I would be seated at a table with the inmate's medical record to put down any notation of something the doctor ordered for him (and would occasionally come across a card in which, stamped in red on it, was the word syphilis.) And sick call lasted perhaps about half an hour, and then I had the basic job of cleaning the hospital. That was my janitor's work: that is, the hospital had to be swept out and laundry taken care of and taken down to the laundry, the toilets (we had several toilets and a washroom) and showers had to be taken care of. And a big



thing was waxing the floors, which sometimes I would be doing on hands and knees and which I never minded very much because it was my physical exercise to do it. On different days of the week I did special things, such as one day a week I cleaned all the instruments that were there, most of which the doc never used, and another day I would clean his office and polish his furniture, every damn thing. And so it went.

But during the hours in which I was doing this kind of janitor work there would be individuals who would come up and would want pills for a headache, someone would come up with something in his eye from the sawmill, and I would have a solution to put into his eye so that I could go after-- that would dull pain for a minute so that I could go after something in his eye. Doc taught me how to lift a lid, which I didn't know, or I watched him do it, I guess. And sometimes there were more serious accidents. There were cuts which I would tend to. And then there would be special things.

Every two or three weeks the dentist came from Marlinton, and the dentist did nothing except pull teeth; he didn't do any other kind of dental work. So that when he was finished, I had to go in and clean up a lot of blood all around, and he was apparently not a very good dentist, because some of the men would have pieces of tooth coming out of their jaws for days afterwards. And occasionally I



had a night call with a man who was bleeding, still bleeding, and I had to try and pack his gum cavity with cotton in order to stop the bleeding. I might say in passing that the attitude of many of the southern hillbillies toward teeth was that the sooner you got rid of your own teeth and got false teeth the better off you were. Men would come in who were only in their early twenties, and they had no more than three or four teeth left in their mouths; this apparently from their diet. And if you could get a free set of teeth made by the government, that was desirable.

GARDNER: Worth going to prison for. [laughter]

MALTZ: Yes, men would come in and let's say they had a three-month sentence for their first time on whiskey, and they would say, "Gee, Doc, can you pull the rest of my teeth and get me some teeth made?" Because they knew about the government teeth. The doc would take an--the dentist would take an impression, but the teeth were made, I think, in Springfield, Missouri. And so the men would want their teeth taken out for that purpose.

And one other job that I would have every few weeks was to take care of new men coming into the prison camp. Since they came usually from filthy jails in small southern towns, my most important task was to see that they took showers and, after they took showers, to put DDT powder on



all their hairy parts because otherwise there might be an infestation of body lice in the prison. So this task of cleaning up the hospital, and taking care of men who came up, usually would take me up to the time of lunch. Sometimes I would be through a little before, and then I was free to do whatever I wished. I could go to my room and sit down to read the New York Times, which I got there, or I could take a walk if I chose, or do anything else . . . go to the library as long as I was in hearing distance of the loudspeaker, which might summon me for an emergency. And, oh, as soon as I was through with sick call, I would change to regular denims and not wear them again until the next morning, not wear the whites again till next morning. My afternoon responsibilities were usually light unless I had a man in one of the beds who needed tending to, as, for instance, someone who had a sprained back and needed hot packs constantly, and so on. And so the afternoon could be spent, generally, in a fairly leisurely way.

After I had been there in that job only a little while, I saw that my time was being cut into in a very ridiculous way. That is to say, there would be sick call, and I would start doing some cleaning, and then a man would come up and ask me for some working pills. (That was the southern term for a cathartic, workin' pills.) And so I'd have to stop my work and wash my hands in order





to go into the medicine chest and get him the working pills. And then I would start to work again, and another man would come up, and he might want some working pills. So I went to the superintendent and told him what was happening and said, "It isn't as though a man had a headache and needed aspirin to cure the headache. This is something that they could ask for at regular sick call in the morning, or if you'll let me do a sick call in the evening, they could do it then and not keep coming up every five, ten minutes for the same damn thing because they don't feel like coming to sick call." And so he agreed to let me establish an evening sick call which I held by myself, and I very quickly got the men to know that if they had any emergency they could come at any time; and if they didn't, they were not to come except at the two sick calls.

I also learned very quickly that the men there had been accustomed to giving the medical orderly before me occasional bribes in order to get him to give them things. Otherwise, he had one device or another of putting them off, or saying come back later, I'm busy, or some such thing. Some of them would start to come with bribes to me; they'd offer me candy when I gave them some pills, and they'd offer me cigarettes. And then when I, you know, made clear that I wasn't going to take anything from anyone, it made for a changed situation in the camp in reference to



the medical orderly.

Like others, I learned very quickly to try and work at what I would call the passing laugh. For instance, a man would come in and ask for some aspirin, and I'd say, "Well, all I have today (tonight) are some secondhand aspirins; I don't have any firsthand." And he'd say, "That's all right, I'm secondhand myself." And this kind of thing would go on.

During the warm months before, let's say, October, the evening recreation, if you wanted, was softball, and since I had played softball all through my years in Los Angeles, I went out for one of the teams. I was asked if I was willing to go on a team which I found out had all black men on it, and I said sure. And then I found that the man who was the leader of that team, who was in for whiskey, but was basically a farmer, was a most admirable man. He was a very powerful, illiterate, but keenly intelligent man, and very stern in his effort to stimulate other men toward what I'd call black nationalism. And one of the things he wanted to do was to have his team, all black, beat the white teams. And so, while he accepted me on the team, he didn't let me play. And within one game I saw that I was a better player than four or five men on his team, and I raised hell and said I wasn't going to be treated like a patsy, I was a better player than some of those on the



team, and he was forced to let me play. But the games were not too enjoyable because, as I found out very soon in that area, most of the men who were in, not for whiskey but for crime, were in because of their own character failures: they were grossly neurotic men. And this was manifest even in baseball games because something would happen in a game, such as a call by an umpire that they felt was unfair, and they would throw down their glove, and they would walk away from the field and wouldn't play anymore. And pretty soon a game would be called off. So I never knew when I started a game when it would end.

The other recreations possible were the library and, surprisingly, for a small prison with a small library, they had excellent books. I could have spent years just reading my way through the books that they had there. They also had a librarian for about three months who put all the books--not all the books, who put half of the books in upside down because, apparently, there was something wrong with his eyes. [laughter] And there were checkers and dominos, and there was chess, and I found a number of chess partners so that we could play that. And actually, we were taught a special chess game by a man who came from Atlanta prison (which I'm using in a short story I've already written the first draft of), a game which involved four men and took a long time, and, of course, any game



that took a long time was very desirable because time was your enemy.

I got the New York Times, I got the New Yorker, and I had that reading and I had library reading, of course. And we would have movies usually once a week. In the summer months they were out of doors where all the men could see them at once, and when the cold weather came, we went by barracks to see them in the library. At first the movies were lousy Monogram movies which were hard to watch they were so bad, but later in the year we got a few good ones, and that was very delightful.

GARDNER: No Maltzes?

MALTZ: No. As a matter of fact, just after I left they played the little short The House I Live In, and I heard that from an inmate who came out later. But it didn't play while I was there. Would have been interesting if it had, yes.

Among my friends there, because I developed cordial relations with quite a number of the men, there was Dmytryk, of course, who in general was a very pleasant man, very agreeable to be with, but with a certain shell of armor around him so that you got so close and no closer. And he had a gentle wit which involved something that I wasn't aware of at first and then perceived later, which was a gentle wit of putting down someone else, not in a





harsh way, but it was nevertheless based upon putting someone down. And I began to learn things about him. I had never known him at all well; I had never known him well. For instance, we learned on our auto trip down that we both enjoyed chess, and so we said, well, let's play together. And from the way he talked about chess, I had a strong impression that he was a better player than I was, and I think he was. So in our first chess game I played with maximum attention and care, and Dmytryk with a certain amount of overconfidence, I think, so played that I beat him. I imagine if we had played more he would have beat me quite regularly, but the interesting thing is that he never played me chess again. And so that sort of told something about him.

In the prison when we came there were Howard Fast and Professor Lyman Bradley of New York University, who had been chairman of the German department, and both of whom were on the board of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee. Bradley, whom I had never known before, was a very gentle gentleman, and he was really not cut out for, I think, the kind of struggle that he had found himself in, although he had behaved with absolute honor. And I came to like him very much in our short time together. They were only to be in there for another four weeks or so. And Howard I had only known in passing so that this was my



first opportunity to get to know him, and what I learned about him I didn't like very much.

For instance, at one point, he asked the superintendent if he could make a sculpture of a little boy that would be put in a fountain. There was a marvelous black stonemason in the prison who was in on income tax, a middle-aged man, and the prison was using him to do all sorts of work that they had wanted to have done for a long time. And he would make a little patio near the black barracks, and a fountain, and this little boy that Howard would sculpt would be in the fountain. And the superintendent gave his permission, and Howard did the sculpture so that the water would come out of the boy's penis. And this was something that was done in fountains in Europe and so on and very charming, and he did a very nice figure. And I said to him, "How can you do a thing like this?" And he said, "Oh, you just do it." He didn't tell me what I learned from Who's Who after I came out of prison: that he had been a student at the, I think, New York Academy of Design after high school, so evidently he had some artistic leanings before, or concomitant with, his beginning to write. And then on another occasion after prison I received his biography from an East German organization of Anglo-American literature. And I knew what that was about because they had asked me for my biography as well. And they



reproduced both of them in English, and in Howard's he spoke of the fact that he had been born in poverty; and when he was a young man, he roamed the country in boxcars; and he carried brass knuckles and he used them. And here was a self-portrait of a kind of contemporary Jack London, which was, of course, something that delighted the East Germans, I'm sure, but it had nothing to do with a young man who had gone to the New York Academy of Design and who said nothing in his Who's Who about roaming the country as a hobo. So that he was telling one biography for Who's Who and another biography for someone else. And actually, when he left the Communist party, he published an article in the Saturday Review about his background, and there he told about his poverty in the same way that he had in the-- this was now to be an excuse for why he had joined the Communist party. So that with that, and with the way he had written about George Washington, while at the same time knowing his very great creative talent, I nevertheless was turned off about him as a person. A kind of a final turnoff occurred one day in the barracks when I was down there talking with him and with Lyman Bradley. Howard said to us in slow and measured tones, "You know, I've been giving a great deal of thought to something." [tape recorder turned off] Howard, in measured tones, said, "You know, I've been giving a great deal of thought to this matter,



and I've come to the conclusion that I am the most important living American writer."

GARDNER: At what point was this?

MALTZ: This was in prison. And Lyman Bradley gave a kind of inarticulate gasp and just jumped up and bolted out of the barracks. [laughter] And I don't know what I said, but I mumbled something or other out of my astonishment and . . . that was Howard.

My closest friend through most of my stay was an educated black man, an engineer, Arthur. We became very good friends and closer and closer as time went on. We played chess together, and the atmosphere of the prison was such that we could go walking together, and if there were comments about it behind our back, there was no trouble from it. But I was also very friendly with a lot of the other men and, of course, learned as much about them as I could.

GARDNER: You talked about your being an orderly. Did Edward Dmytryk have anything similar to that that he did?

MALTZ: Oh, he was in the garage. And he was sort of a checkout man keeping records of what trucks went out and how much gas was used and this kind of thing.

The general rule for visits was that one was allowed two hours a month. But if you had three months of good work reports by your supervisor, you were given an extra





half an hour. And I remember saying to the doc when he had given me a certain grade, but not the grade that would entitle me to the half-hour extra, "What do I have to do to get such-and-such a grade?" And he didn't say anything, but he just gave me that grade. And so I had two-and-a-half-hour visits every month from my wife beginning in August. The first time she came, she came with Jean Dmytryk, and they both flew to Charleston and then they hired a car and drove to Mill Point. They stayed overnight in Marlinton, and because they had not visited in July, they had four hours, so they visited two hours on one day and two hours the next day, which was permitted.

I guess I might mention now that when I came to Mill Point after Washington, the first thing I did, as soon as I could get my hands on paper and pencil, was to write down all seventy pages of the notes that I had memorized. And since so much of this was about--since all of the notes were about the operation of the Washington jail and details about life there, and things about the inmates there, I was afraid that I would forget them in the months that I was going to be in Mill Point, and I wanted to get them out for a novel. This was very interesting psychologically because I would not have done anything. I remember, for instance, that at one point a man there offered me a drink of some booze of some sort that had been made illegally, I think in



the kitchen, out of fermented raisins or something like that. I refused it although I would very much have loved to have had some alcohol and had myself a drunk and gone to sleep, let's say, if I could, or just a drink. But as against getting into trouble, which could have happened if, let's say, there was a medical emergency and they found that I had some whiskey smell on me, I would never have touched it, and I didn't touch it. I had a few other kooky offers of that kind, and I would have nothing to do with it. But when it came to getting out some material for a novel, I was ready to risk something for that, which is an interesting contradiction. And I finally decided on a method that I thought could work.

I was a smoker at that time, and I was able to get some onion-skin paper in the doc's office. I then printed my notes very minutely (printing making it clearer) on the onion skin, so that I must have gotten perhaps twelve, fourteen, fifteen hundred words on a page (perhaps not that many, but a great many words). Having measured this before, I then folded the paper in such a way that it came out to the exact size of the cigarettes I was smoking. And I rolled the paper up very tightly and then stapled it with Doc's stapler. Then I took a package of cigarettes, took out all of the cigarettes, and put in, I think, two or three, no more, of these rolled cigarette papers, so-called



rolled cigarettes, in the pack, and this was something that went on over a period of months. I had previously told my wife, who didn't smoke, to come next time with the same type of cigarette that I was smoking. And as we smoked, I offered her one from my pack, and she took it; and then we exchanged packs, because this wasn't a porthole visit. We were in a room in which there were some other couples, and there was a guard. All I had to do was to keep my eye on the guard and shift the package of cigarettes from one lap to the other, and she was able to take them out. Now, if they'd been found on her, I probably would have lost my good time.

GARDNER: Really.

MALTZ: Oh, yes, I would have lost my good time, and I might have gotten some extra time. I certainly would have lost my good time and would have been transferred from Mill Point to a prison of a different--tighter prison. But I was willing to risk that. And in that way I got out all of my notes which were invaluable to me when I came to writing up the novel.

The food at Mill Point was better than in the Washington jail, and I have some examples of it. There would be always at breakfast a little stewed fruit from a can, which was good. There would be cold cereal. There would be some blue milk and some bread, which was edible, and coffee, or



there might be some flapjacks. For lunch there might be a wiener or sometimes one hamburger patty, which would be half-fat and a quarter bread and the rest meat. Or there would be a piece of fish on Friday, and the fish was usually edible, quite edible. There would be some beets and onions, bread, say some string beans and potatoes and some cold tea. And supper would be beans or fatback and kale or turnip greens, and there might be a cup of good soup, or there might be spaghetti, soup and spaghetti, beets and salad and a cabinet pudding. It was high on carbohydrates, of course. But I did some reading on nutrition and, as a result, I forced myself to eat the turnip greens and the kale, which may be good tasting in some type of cooking but weren't good there: the kale was like eating dry straw, but I covered it with vinegar to give it some taste, and I ate it down because it had vitamins in it that I knew I needed. And I noticed, in looking over some diary notes that I smuggled out, that one Sunday dinner there was chicken, and I wrote underneath that it was very tasty. So one got along on the food. I didn't, actually--I'll come to that later. But it was better than Washington, and it was okay.

The political scene at this time was one in which Julius Rosenberg was arrested just as I left Washington, and Ethel Rosenberg [was arrested] in August. The Korean





War, of course, was going on, and the political atmosphere . . .  
[tape recorder turned off] . . . the political atmosphere  
was one in which you could have the following dispatch  
to the New York Times from Hollywood. I'm quoting from  
page 130 of Cedric Belfrage's American Inquisition--no . . .  
yes, The American Inquisition: "Fear that a motion picture  
dealing with the life and exploits of Hiawatha might be  
regarded as Communist propaganda has caused Monogram Studio  
to shelve such a project. It was Hiawatha's efforts as  
a peacemaker among the warring Indian tribes of his day,  
which brought about the federation of five nations, that  
gave Monogram particular concern, according to a studio  
spokesman. These, it was decided, might cause the picture  
to be regarded as a message for peace and therefore  
helpful to present Communist designs." [laughter] You  
know, it's just beyond belief that this stuff could be  
printed this way, seriously, that people could think this  
way.

GARDNER: That people could accept it.

MALTZ: And people accept it. Of course there were others  
that laughed at it at that time the way we did, but laughed  
bitterly.

GARDNER: Right.

MALTZ: But it's symbolic of the times. Now, in September  
the McCarran Act was passed, and it ordered the establishment  
of concentration camps. And such was the temper of the



times that not only did Senator John Kennedy vote for it (because at that time John Kennedy was part of the McCarthy atmosphere, his brother was an assistant of McCarthy) but Senator Humphrey voted for it, and Wayne Morse voted for it, and [James W.] Fulbright voted for it. At this time also there was the arbitrary imposition by the State Department of a new passport policy that passports would not be issued to those individuals whose travel abroad, in the opinion of the department, would not be in the interests of the United States.

Now, after prison I wrote a letter to Bob Kenny, which I had forgotten but some researchers called it to--two men who did some research recalled it to my mind that I wrote that this was the hardest year of my life, the prison year. And it wasn't because there was discrimination against us; there was in fact small and meaningless discrimination so far as I was concerned personally. Although 60 percent of the inmates were illiterates who were supposed to go to classes in prison, there were orders from Washington that neither Dmytryk nor I should be able to teach them. And I was not allowed to work in the library--I had hoped at first to be a librarian. But in terms of life in the camp, those men who had been in the army, as I had not, said that Mill Point was a lot like an army camp, but there was less discipline and there was less chicken shit.



However, what made it hard were the cumulative frustrations of a routine that became increasingly monotonous, a life that was basically arid. There was separation from wife and children, and there was the anxiety about what would happen in the future that I was mentioning, and there was the sheer violation of one's spirit that comes from being locked up. The diet there did have an effect upon my health, and I must say that there are mysteries to nutrition as far as individuals are concerned. I did my best to eat intelligently while I was there, but I saw men who rejected all vegetables, who loved the fatback, which had nothing in it but fat pork, and who worked hard in the coal mine or on the farm or in the timber, cutting timber, and they remained perfectly well; but I came out with a swollen liver from malnutrition and felt quite depleted when I first came out.

GARDNER: Well, it could have been just that, the fact that your diet had been richer before you went in, whereas theirs was no change in diet whatsoever.

MALTZ: Yes, excepting why hadn't they--I mean, some of them ate what I would consider almost a pellagra diet, and as a matter of fact, some of them came up with rashes to the hospital, and from what I read, I thought that those might have been an initial pellagra rash. You know, that's a guess from a layman; just reading about something doesn't mean



you know it in medical matters. But I know that I would recommend that they eat some of the vegetables, and yet others who ate the same diet didn't show that. So I just don't know.

I could, in my spare time in Mill Point, have done some writing, but the rule was that any writing you did had to be read by the superintendent. I knew that I couldn't work on the novel I had conceived because that was about prison. They would never let it out. And somehow, any other writing that I had had in mind was just not in the forefront. I had to do this prison novel or nothing else. And so I spent my time as pleasantly as I could in free time, and that meant chess and reading. I got along very well with the other men, and the black men in the jail learned very quickly that there was no discrimination in the way I dispensed services, and so I developed some friendships with them. Like the others, I applied for parole, and there were many times in which men who applied for parole got an answer within a few weeks. But mine didn't come for months, and it was a denial. Elmer Rice was among those who wrote to the parole board for me, but the members of the board said frankly to Margaret, my wife, when she went down there, "What's he going to do when he gets out? He's going to be against the Korean War, isn't he?" And so made it clear that, on political grounds,





no parole would be forthcoming.

From time to time I would get verbal communications from Trumbo through some man being sent to our place from Ashland. And things like that were small pleasures.

[background noise] Is that noise going to come out on the tape?

GARDNER: I don't think so. We'll find out.

MALTZ: Well, I can have them quieted.

GARDNER: Well, it's almost over, anyway.

MALTZ: My relationship with Dmytryk was a very friendly one. We certainly had special things in common as we did with no one else in the prison, and he would come to me to tell me that he had gotten a letter from Jean about what had happened to a film of his that he had made.

GARDNER: I think this is. . . . [tape recorder turned off]

MALTZ: I want to add something to the parole thing. I cut out with amusement something in June. Attorney General [Griffin] Bell said he would have been inclined to put former Attorney General John Mitchell on probation rather than send him to jail. Not having done that, he said, "I think I might have had him serve ten days or sixty days. That's enough." Bell told television interviewer Barbara Walters that Mitchell was a first offender who most likely would have been given probation if he had been an unknown bank robber. "And even the rich have rights," he said.



"We lean over backwards, and we are a little less careful with the rights of the rich than the poor." Well, I'm thinking of that in reference to this treatment of us.

With Dmytryk . . . he revealed in a current autobiography that in the first meeting with his wife, in which she came to the prison with mine, he planned a statement about the Korean War that he gave subsequently to Bart Crum in which he disassociated himself from the rest of the Ten. But of course, he didn't say anything to me about it.

And a very interesting thing happened. The unnamed film that I had been working on, worked on before prison, came out, and to marvelous critical reception, and became a large commercial success. And it was the most natural thing in the world for me to want to tell someone about it. And whom could I tell with more assurance of trust than another man in jail with me? And at the last moment I said to myself, hey, what's the matter with you? What kind of immaturity is this? You just don't talk about these things, that's all. You don't talk about it even with someone in jail with you, and so I never told Dmytryk. But if I had, in the atmosphere of that time when he became an informer not too many months later, I think he would have ruined the careers of the man who put his name on the film, of the producer of the film, perhaps of an agent involved,



and of a number of others who knew about the thing. So  
it was marvelously fortunate I didn't.

Among the pleasures. . . .

GARDNER: This side's out.



TAPE NUMBER: XXI, SIDE ONE

DECEMBER 22, 1978

MALTZ: One of the pleasures that came in prison were letters.

GARDNER: Now let me just play this back to see if it came through. [tape recorder turned off]

MALTZ: My wife was marvelous about writing, and almost invariably I received a letter every day from her. Perhaps other men would not have looked forward to each letter as much as I did mine, but that was so with me. Under the prison rules I could have an occasional letter from two friends whom I had asked if they wanted to write to me. One was George Sklar, and he was very faithful in writing and wrote lovely letters, because mostly he told me about his children, to whom I felt close, and he wrote about them in a very charming way. The other close friend, Michael Blankfort, wrote me only one letter, that I recall, in the nine months, and that was clearly a self-serving letter designed to tell whatever persons read it that he was not a radical. The letter distressed me, but there was nothing I could do about it.

There were various types of small pleasures that I had from time to time, and some that I cultivated. For instance, on Lincoln's Birthday I was delighted to hear "The Lonesome Train" played with the words by Millard





Lampell and music by Earl Robinson. It is a piece that I always had loved, and it was kind of a triumph for me to hear it under these circumstances. Not only was Earl Robinson an old friend but I was very, very fond of Millard Lampell and his wife Elizabeth, whom I adored.

Another small pleasure was to run out when there were still some flowers along the central walk in the prison and to pick up those which were cut and take back two or three zinneas and marigolds, put them into a tin drinking cup in my room, throw in a couple of aspirin (which I had been told would prolong their life), and so enjoy these flowers.

Humor, laughter, was something that one always sought. I remember once . . . I remember this kind of thing that went on as much as possible, as much as the inmates could do it. Some new men came in, and a black inmate was talking to a new white inmate in for whiskey who asked what a white patch off in the distance was, and the black man said that it was the graveyard. And then he explained to the newcomer that if a man died while in prison he was buried out in that graveyard until he had served his time, and only then could his family come and get his body and take him home. The newcomer was very upset about this and thought that this was a terrible rule and, of course, this became a source of great laughter.



I am now in the process of trying to build a sort of memoir-story about a day, Sunday, in which I and some others were hurriedly piled into a truck in order to aid a couple of men who had crashed in a plane some miles from the camp. I was taken along, of course, because of being the medical orderly, and while I wanted to do everything I could for the men who were injured, there was another aspect to the whole day which was that we got out of the camp; we got to go to a town, and we got to see a few people other than the camp inmates. That made it a glorious and exciting day.

In November 1950 Dmytryk left since he had completed his six-month sentence less good time, and his manner with me was cordial and warm; but as I know now from his autobiography, he had already decided on a complete political split with the rest of us.

That year, in 1950, the collection of my speeches, The Citizen Writer, was published and also a short story, "Circus Come to Town." There were a great many foreign reprints of my work, and my income in the year was a little over . . . just a second, I can't . . . [tape recorder turned off] . . . was a little over \$4,000.

GARDNER: Quite a drop from the previous year.

MALTZ: Yes, yes. This was not wholly indicative, as you'll see, of what happened in succeeding years, because



of foreign royalties and so on.

During the months of 1951 I gave increasing thought to the way in which I wanted to live from now on. I knew that I wanted surcease from the kind of intense organizational activity which I had accepted as part of my life from about 1935 on, and which had been exaggerated in the two and a half years of the Hollywood case. I wanted maximum time for writing, and I had no interest in making further speeches. I also knew that if I would go back to Los Angeles, there would be absolutely no way in which I could remove myself from organizational activity because it would be regarded by others as an abandonment of responsibility and duty. And no matter what explanations I would try to make, and no matter what justification I would offer, it would still be regarded in that way by those who were themselves active. And I knew that the pressures would be enormous and that feelings would be involved. And so in view of the fact that there was no chance of going abroad, since the passport policy established after the beginning of the Korean War would prevent me from getting a passport, my thoughts turned to Mexico where our old friend Lini DeVries was now living. And my wife and I began to plan for that in our monthly meetings.

The routine of prison life went on as I have described until the time came that I was to leave. I must say that in the weeks, and then the days, in which I was "getting



short" (which is the prison term for coming close to leaving), I became more and more tense over the question of whether or not I would be met at the exit from the prison by a couple of marshals with a hold order.

GARDNER: Why is that?

MALTZ: I had that on my mind because there were a number of inmates who had committed state crimes as well as the federal one for which they were in Mill Point, and they all said that just as they left prison there would be state officers there with a hold order to immediately arrest them and take them either for trial or to a state penitentiary. And in my case, although there was no other infraction in which I was involved, nevertheless there was my anxiety about the concentration camps and the McCarran--under the McCarran law. However, nothing like that happened to me, and it was a sign of the times that when I left, at about six o'clock in the morning before any of the other inmates were awake, the superintendent of the prison emerged from behind a car (parked near the taxi that had come for me) to shake my hand and say goodbye and wish me well. Now, the superintendent was a very decent man, and it's certain that what I would call the benign quality of the camp was due to him in considerable part. We had had several conversations during the course of the year, and he had also read some notes that I made which I wanted





to take out in my hand; I thought that he would pass them, and he had read them and he did pass them. But he could have summoned me to his office the day before and said goodbye to me, and he didn't do that. It's my belief that he used the method of hiding behind a car in the semilight of very early morning because there were FBI informers on the staff of the prison camp who would have reported him for this. I may be wrong about that, but his behavior needs some explanation.

The taxi which I had been allowed to arrange for-- or, no, the taxi which my wife had arranged for at her last visit drove me seventy miles to Charleston, West Virginia, where my wife was. We took a plane to St. Louis, where we remained overnight and the next day took another plane to Mexico City.

I think I might mention now that there were two hangovers that prison left me with, and they were not what people would have guessed. For instance, some people in later years very delicately asked me if I would mind speaking about, telling, answering some questions about prison as though they were asking me about something that would churn up so much feeling that I would be convulsed with pain. Well, it was nothing like that at all. It was perfectly comfortable for me to talk about it as about any other experience I had had. It gave me no turn



whatsoever to see a prison scene in a movie, and so on. But even though I wore blue jeans in the years before prison as an ordinary working garment, I have been unable to put on blue jeans since. It's a most curious hangup. I've tried to, but when I start to put my leg through one of them, I get just a bad feeling. It's not logical, but that's my reaction, and I've never worn a pair of blue jeans since.

And the second reaction was perfectly fascinating. In 1972 it was necessary for me to have a pacemaker, and I was in intensive care in the hospital for several days after the surgery. During that time my motion was severely limited because I was hooked up to a cardiac monitor and it was not possible for me to get out of bed or to turn very much. And my wife Esther visiting me every day, being with me all day, actually, was under the impression that I was depressed. I wasn't aware of this. But she definitely thought so. And at my very first meal at home I commented--without any thought except for what I was saying--"This is better food than I got in that jail," and I didn't even realize I had used the word jail until my wife pointed it out to me. And the next day, referring to the man who had been in the room with me after I was moved out of intensive care, I said, "You know, my cellmate was a pretty nice guy." And once again I didn't realize that I had used the word



cellmate, so it's quite clear that the "imprisonment" of intensive care had thrown me back into prison.

GARDNER: And that you were affected much more subconsciously than you realized.

MALTZ: I suppose . . . although I don't feel it in other ways. Amusing, isn't it?

GARDNER: Yes.

MALTZ: We only stayed overnight in Mexico City, and then we moved right down to Cuernavaca where our friend Lini was living. I want to pause now and tell a little of what happened to her since the occasion when I traveled with her in New Mexico into the villages where she was acting as public health nurse.

She remained in that job for several more years, and then she became head of public health nursing in Puerto Rico for several years, and from that job she moved to being chief nurse in a very large venereal disease clinic in Chicago where a major effort was under way to carry out a campaign of education on the VD problem. And from that job she moved to be head of public health care for the Mexican crop workers who came to California during World War II in order to do harvesting. They came by arrangement between the U.S. government and the Mexican government, and there were stipulations in it about the conditions under which they would live and these involved health care. And



Lini was in charge of all of the services involved in that from the nursing point of view, and inspection of conditions and so on.

But when the war was over and when, finally, enough soldiers came home so that this arrangement with the Mexican government came to an end, her job came to an end, and by that time the inquisition had begun, the political inquisition had begun, and she was named by Elizabeth Bentley as a Communist. And from then on it became impossible for her to hold any of the government jobs that she once had held. Nursing in a hospital was now too hard for her physically, and she finally had a job for some months as the nurse in an old-age home; but the FBI caught up with her there by speaking to the superintendent, and she was fired from that.

At that point, with a three-year-old daughter and a divorced husband who provided no support, she decided to try and make a new life for herself in Mexico, and she went there. She had had contact with a very well-known Spanish refugee, a woman whose husband had been one of the top officers of the Spanish Republican air force. She was now living in Cuernavaca and running a textile business, and Lini went down to live with her and to help her in the management of her home.

But by the time we came to Mexico, Lini was no longer living with that woman, who had tragically been killed in





an automobile accident. She was now in a small apartment in a suburb of Cuernavaca, earning a precarious living by giving English lessons. Lini had rented a house for us on a temporary basis, with our prior agreement, of course, and it turned out to be the home in which German political refugees, who had been in the United States but who had had to leave the United States at the outbreak of war, had used as a rest home. I don't know if I stated that clearly. I prefer to state it over again. Various of the German refugees in the United States such as some I have mentioned--André Simone . . . well, he was Czech--André Simone, the novelist, Anna Seghers, and many others, had not been permitted to remain in the United States once we went to war with Germany. They had accordingly gone to Mexico and lived there. And they were able to rent a large home in Cuernavaca as a kind of weekend place, as a rest home for their group. By the time we came in 1951, all of them had returned to Europe, to their various countries, and so we by accident moved into the same house. It was a very spacious house, old and poorly built and, for some reason, had tinted windows on its second floor so that it looked as though it were a whorehouse. But it provided adequate space for us, and it had a big lawn and and unheated swimming pool.



I arrived in Cuernavaca not feeling too well and was at once introduced to a local doctor, an Austrian by birth, Ernesto Amann. He had been a volunteer to the Republican side in the civil war in Spain, and had married a Spanish woman, Pilar, and then had been one of the many Spanish refugees from the war, from the Republican side, who were admitted by the Mexican government. He was practicing medicine in Cuernavaca. He found that I had an enlarged liver due, he felt, to inadequate nutrition in prison, and he put me on a high-protein diet and gave me shots, and within a matter of weeks, I believe, I began to feel better.

I began almost at once to dictate notes on life in Mill Point and on the characters in Mill Point because I wanted to have a permanent file on this. The notes I had put on cigarette papers had already been typed out by a secretary my wife had hired, and as soon as I completed these notes, which took several weeks, I began to plan the novel for which I already had a title of A Long Day in a Short Life.

The second round of hearings of alleged communism in the film industry opened just as I arrived in Mexico. Dore Schary and the producers who had come to speak to the Writers Guild two and a half, now three and a half years before, had said, "Give us these ten men, and we will promise you that no one else will be blacklisted."



Well, now the blacklisting was ready to start in earnest. In March Larry Parks had appeared before the House Committee with his impotent plea that they not force him to drag himself through the mud, and now starting in early April there came a parade of informers. One of the first was the most interesting, Sterling Hayden, the actor, because in the sixties he published a book called Wanderer in which he flagellated himself for having been an informer. Edward Dmytryk appeared, and I have always had this theory about Dmytryk and have found no reason to change my mind: I think that if he had been allowed to go to Europe to make films, he would have done so and merely would have been quiet politically. But since the passport policy prevented him from doing that, he just made a cold decision that he was going to work no matter what was involved in his doing so. And so he became an informer. So also did Richard Collins, who had been one of the Hollywood Nineteen, and Marc Lawrence, the actor, and Frank Tuttle, the director of This Gun for Hire, the first man I worked with in Hollywood, and Budd Schulberg.

Now, it has always been very interesting to me that various individuals sought to find justification for becoming informers [pause in tape] by blaming the Communist party for something it did. For instance, in Schulberg's case, he was angry that members of the Communist party had asserted



that his novel What Makes Sammy Run was anti-Semitic. And in Dmytryk's case, he always repeated that some members of the Communist party had wanted him to change the way he had made his film Cornered. But no matter what the Communist party's sins were, even if they had been magnified a hundred times in the case of each one of these individuals, it would not have explained why they were cooperating with a committee that was trying to promote thought control in the United States. And this is what is so often missed in any discussion of the testimony of people before that committee. The real issue, for instance, was never whether people were going to state whether or not they had been Communists; the issue was whether or not they were going to accept the committee's right to inquire into the political thinking and the political activity of citizens. Now, as against these friendly witnesses to the committee, a whole host of individuals I had known and, in some cases, been very friendly with stood up against the committee: for instance, in this early April period Leonardo Bercovici, John Bright, Paul Jarrico, Abe Polonsky, Waldo Salt (who had been one of the Nineteen), John Wexley, Jay Gorney, Karen Morley, Lloyd Gough, Howard Da Silva (who had acted in several of my plays), Ann Revere, Lionel Stander, Gale Sondergaard, Robert Lees, and Will Geer (who had been going around with Ann Revere playing the radio play of The Journey of Simon McKeever).





GARDNER: How did you hear about that? How did you follow this through. . . ?

MALTZ: Well, I got the New York Times.

GARDNER: Did you also have correspondents here? Did George Sklar, for example . . .

MALTZ: Oh, yes, I corresponded . . .

GARDNER: . . . keep you in touch?

MALTZ: . . . I corresponded with friends once I was out, indeed. But we got the New York Times every day, a couple of days late down in Cuernavaca, of course, some days late, and I shortly, I think, subscribed to an airmail edition of the New York Times so would get it in a couple of days. And, you know, [I] very soon subscribed to a whole list of periodicals--did I use the Spanish word then?

GARDNER: No.

MALTZ: Yes, I started to think in Spanish. [laughter] And so there was no problem.

Now, I'd like to pause just a moment and comment on the Fifth Amendment. None of those who opposed the committee in this second round of hearings stood on the First Amendment as we in the Ten had done, and for very good reason. There was no point in quixotically taking a position that would result in jail and would not result, in the present, in that atmosphere, in any possible court reversal. Now, in all of the years in which there were individuals who



protected themselves by the use of the Fifth Amendment before this committee and other committees, the members of the committees and various people in the media tried to say that they were hiding behind the Fifth Amendment. They tried to make the Fifth Amendment something dirty. And they tried to make it an automatic confession of guilt. This was an extraordinary perversion of the meaning of the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution and the reason why our forefathers had included it.

The Fifth Amendment had come into existence as a means of protecting citizens against the potential tyranny of the state. Our founding fathers had very much in mind certain events in England in which Catholics, for instance, were forced to testify by a Protestant government about their religious beliefs, and were then punished for having them. Therefore they gave (in the Fifth Amendment) all citizens the right to decline to answer questions under oath on the ground that it might incriminate or degrade them. And the real purpose of the Fifth Amendment was to compel the state to make a case and not to coerce an individual to make a case against himself.

But that's precisely what the House Committee on Un-American Activities was trying to do: it was trying to degrade people, to cause them to lose their jobs even though they had committed no breach of the law for which they



could be legitimately prosecuted. And with the exception of some individuals like Alexander Meikeljohn and Carey McWilliams and Telford Taylor and Walter Gellhorn of the Columbia Law School and Tom Emerson of the Yale Law School and Henry Steele Commager of Columbia University--with the exception of such individuals, every one in the media expressed tremendous disdain and contempt for those who took the Fifth Amendment. This was an enormous perversion of the democratic process, and the very fact of saying that any part of the Constitution, or any one of the constitutional guarantees to citizens, was something that a citizen should not use was a perversion.

Returning now to myself, my children came down to Cuernavaca very soon after our arrival with their aunt, Katherine Larkin. And since there was no school adequate for my son, we made an arrangement with Lini for tutoring, and Kathy went to a bilingual school run by a German refugee couple.

Very soon after I arrived in Cuernavaca I was surprised to have a phone call--no, not a phone call, I was surprised to get a letter or a telegram from Frank Ross, the producer of The Robe, who was in Mexico City. This film had not yet been made because, as I believe I may have mentioned earlier, Howard Hughes had become head of RKO and he had refused, not only to make it there, but



had not allowed Frank Ross to take it somewhere else--  
a fine example of the capriciousness of enormous wealth.  
But now someone else was at the head of the studio, and  
Ross had been given leave to take the script elsewhere,  
and he wanted to see me. I can only assume at this late  
date that I had written my agent upon my coming out of  
jail and he had gotten the address from her. He came to  
Cuernavaca and told me that he had a deal with Darryl  
Zanuck at Fox, Twentieth Century-Fox, for the production  
of The Robe (and he had now been trying to get this project  
done for about eight years). My name on the script was now  
the only thing that stood in the way of its being done.  
I told him at once that I would not stand in the way but  
I of course was not happy at the . . . [tape recorder  
turned off] . . . I was not happy with the fact that my  
name was going to be taken off. . . .





TAPE NUMBER: XXI, SIDE TWO

DECEMBER 22, 1978

MALTZ: I was not happy with the fact that my name was going to be taken off the script . . . and, oh, well, taken off the script--that's the end of that sentence. It so happens that a year later the Writers Guild, the Screen Writers Guild, gave producers the right to take names off scripts if someone had appeared before the committee and had not cooperated. But at this time there was no such right. I made clear to Frank Ross that I felt that I should be recompensed in part by something financial, but I left it up to him as to what that would be, and he responded with a letter after he got back to Los Angeles giving me 2½ percent of his profits from the film, and those proved to be very substantial later on.

In the May 10 edition of the Saturday Evening Post an article appeared called "What Makes a Hollywood Communist" by Richard English. English was both a screen-writer and a journalist, and it was all based on Edward Dmytryk and a phony portrait of what he was, and when and how he had joined the Communist party and so on. It so happened that I was able to write a commentary on this, exposing every lie in it, and I could do that without reference to any documents. For instance, he claimed that he was completely on the outs with the other members of the



Ten by a certain date. Well, more or less after that date--not more or less, but it was after that date that I was best man at his wedding. And since this was a matter of public record, there was no way he could get around it. There were any number of such things. I wrote my commentary and sent it up to Herbert Biberman, and he went down to the Hollywood Reporter--oh, I had arranged, in sending it to Herbert, I had arranged with Herbert that I would pay the cost if he could get it into one of the Hollywood trade papers as an advertisement since I knew that the Saturday Evening Post would never publish my response. And Herbert went to Variety and they rejected it. But then he went to the Hollywood Reporter and said that he wanted to place this as an ad, and it was accepted and appeared on the twenty-ninth of May. It can now be found on page 400 of Thirty Years of Treason by Eric Bentley. (It is not listed in the chapter headings.) It's quite evident that my comments were very upsetting to the people backing Dmytryk because there was a reply in the Hollywood Reporter on June 6 that was entitled "You Can Be Free Men Again!" and it was signed by Ronald Reagan, Roy Brewer, and others. And there was another article by Victor Lasky, a commentator in the New Leader, on August 6 about it. And finally, in Dmytryk's autobiography published this year, 1978, he refers to this and says that the Communist party selected me to be the



hatchet man after he'd testified because I had been his best man and because I had been in prison with him. He then says that my comments were half-truths and distortions, and that's all he has to say about it. By the way, I have found this with Blankfort, too: whenever you nail somebody, their only response is that you ripped things out of context, you had half-truths and distortions, and that's all they say. [laughter] They never give an illustration.

It was fairly early in my stay in Cuernavaca that somebody introduced me to David, well, that's David [Alfaro] Siqueiros. And I remember we stood around on some plaza in Cuernavaca talking for about an hour. Siqueiros spoke excellent English. That was about the longest conversation we had until a few weeks before he went to jail some years later, because I purposefully stayed away from Siqueiros. He was a very active, very prominent member of the Mexican Communist party, and it was Mexican law that foreigners not get involved in Mexican politics. I had no desire to be involved, and it would have been foolish from every point of view for me to try to lead any kind of a political life as a foreigner in that country. But I knew that if I were seen enough in his company that conclusions would be drawn by the Mexican government about it.



I remember something that was a fascinating little insight on Mexico. On one occasion that summer, when my wife and I were in Mexico City on some business, we were invited to a special comida, eating about 2:30 in the afternoon in the open air in a beautiful garden in a district called the Pedregal. Now, this was a dinner attended by perhaps 100 people, and it was to signalize a renewal of the friendship between Siqueiros and Diego Rivera. I would imagine that their break had occurred quite some years before, when Diego Rivera had espoused the cause of Leon Trotsky, who was a refugee in Mexico for some years, and Rivera helped him financially. At that time Rivera was expelled from the Communist party of Mexico, and I'm sure that he and Siqueiros broke off personal relations. Subsequently Siqueiros led a small group of men in an attempt to assassinate Trotsky. The attempt was a failure, and Siqueiros fled from Mexico for several years and lived in a South American country. Siqueiros, by the way, was the most political of all of the great Mexican painters. For a certain period he was secretary of the Mexican Communist party. He went to Spain as a volunteer in the Mexican brigade in the civil war, and I have an idea that the amount of painting he did would always increase whenever he was in jail because he would have more time for it. But now Leon Trotsky had been dead for some years, murdered by an agent of Stalin's,





and Rivera had been attempting to get back into the Communist party. He had been saying openly that he wanted to be readmitted, and this formal reunion between Siqueiros and Rivera was a very early harbinger of Rivera's readmittance, although it didn't in fact take place for some years.

All of this is preface to the fact that at the end of the dinner Siqueiros and Rivera shook hands, and both jumped to their feet and pulled pistols out of their pockets and shot into the air. Now, Rivera's pistol, it so happens, didn't go off, which made it funny, but that brings me to the real point of this story, which is that in Mexico at that time the number of men of all classes who carried weapons was enormous. The reason for this was that the Mexican revolution had lasted ten years, and there were a great many people still alive who had lived through those years and many men who had fought through those years. They had carried weapons for so long that it was a matter of habit and comfort to them to continue to carry weapons.

For instance, a friend of mine was driving on a country road when all traffic was blocked by a boulder that had fallen from a mountain. It was a hot day, and half a dozen men got out of their cars to push the boulder, and all of them were wearing pistols strapped around their waists.



And this being a habit with the older generation, it was passed on to some of the younger ones so that, for instance, at a time when there was a party in my house for my daughter at the age of fifteen (which was the time in which such parties are held in Mexico), a quarrel began between a young Mexican college student, university student, and a young American university student, and in our crowded living room full of dancers the young Mexican pulled a pistol. Now, this never would have happened among college youths in the United States, but there it was not unusual.

At this time, Herbert Biberman got in touch with me and said that he was raising money to do an independent film and asked me if I would write it. And I told him that no, I wanted to concentrate on fiction, and I was already at work on a novel.

The broad political scene at this time was one in which the Korean War was going on with all of the alarms that surrounded it, and the international tensions. The first group of Communist party leaders who had been arrested several years before went to jail at this time after their appeals were turned down, and all sorts of trials and hearings were going on, and two days after I left prison Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were sentenced to death by Judge [Irving] Kaufman. Dashiell Hammett and Frederick Vanderbilt Field entered prison for reasons I've mentioned



earlier, and the American scene was a total nightmare. I can only again refer scholars to the Belfrage book.

Rather early in the summer of 1951, we were introduced to Herman Wouk and his wife at some party to which we were invited. He took occasion on that evening, in rather gratuitous fashion, to make sure that any FBI informants who were at the party knew that he disagreed with my political position. And I didn't blame him for doing that because he had no prior knowledge, I'm sure, that I was going to be there, and he wanted to make clear that he wasn't of my political stripe. By coincidence, the Wouks rented a home about fifty yards away from mine, and it turned out that a young son of about five, I think, perhaps even just of four, whose name was Abram, was going to attend the same school in which our daughter Kathy was going. And since Wouk didn't have an automobile and we did by that time, an arrangement was made through Lini, who was the next-door neighbor to the Wouks, for Abram to be brought to our house in the morning by a maid, and then he was taken to school by my wife. Abram was a remarkable little boy, very handsome, and with an amazing articulateness very rare in a child of that age. He must have had a very high IQ, and I recall that I welcomed his appearance every morning because he was so attractive a little personality.

In the course of the next weeks there would be days in which it might be chilly and I wouldn't go for a swim,



but I would take a walk. On one or two occasions Herman Wouk joined me, and we walked a little together. And, as a result of this, we invited him and his wife to dinner. About half an hour before dinner he came around in a rather agitated state and, I believe, said that his wife was not well, and so they didn't come. But a few days later, when I was swimming, Wouk came over and sat down on the edge of the pool, and we had a conversation for perhaps half an hour as I paddled and swam around, talking about various things associated with the writing business. I had not yet read The Caine Mutiny, but I knew that it was on the best-seller lists and rising to be number one, and it was a very pleasant conversation. During the course of it, Wouk asked me if there had been drownings of children in Hollywood due to the presence of swimming pools, and I said there had been. And he told me that he was arguing, talking with the landlord about putting a fence up around the pool, and there was a question of whether the landlord should pay for it or he should pay for it.

The next morning, just after I had gotten dressed, Wouk dripping with water, came running to the front of the house and shouted, asking whether I knew anything about resuscitation, and I said I did, and ran with him back to his home. His child Abram had been-- He had pulled his child out of the pool. The child had been left with a maid





while they were getting dressed for breakfast, and he evidently had a small boat that they had given him. The maid got involved in talking with some young man over a fence, and presumably the child sat on the edge of the pool with the boat and reached for it and fell in. Now, in Cuernavaca a type of disinfectant was used for pools which was not like the chlorine here: it turned the water a deep opaque blue, and there was no knowing what was below the surface. So that when the child was missed, Herman finally, thinking it might be the pool, had jumped in and had had to swim backwards and forwards underwater until he encountered the child's body. Lini was already trying the methods then in use at resuscitation, and I took over. And people rapidly gathered so that the whole, say, English-speaking community, although some were of German origin, and all different types of people gathered; no matter what their personal differences, everyone centered on the hope that this child could be brought to.

Now, I had read in my first-aid book in prison that hope should not be given up for a drowned person until about four hours of efforts had been made at resuscitation, and so I had that in my mind. And we kept that up for hour after hour even though Dr. Ernesto Amann came around after about an hour and gave the boy a shot in the heart, and then whispered to me that there was nothing to be done.



But I had this compulsive need not to quit before the four hours were over. Of course, I couldn't remain on my knees all that time; others took my place and so on. But there was no-- The child was dead. And I knew, of course, that Wouk would have cut off both his arms rather than delay having a fence put in because he was discussing with the landlord who should pay for it. It was the kind of thing that must have provided enormous guilt for him because he loved this child certainly as much as any father ever loved a child. And his wife was stricken. It was very fortunate for both of them that she was pregnant at the time as I recall and . . . or did she have a . . . ? I think she was pregnant . . . not about to have another . . . without a little one. I forget whether there was a little one already, or she was pregnant. But then, at their request, I spent the next several days with Herman trying to occupy his time and doing things like opening letters and telegrams for him, because this death had occurred on a Friday, Friday morning, and on Saturday Wouk, who was a very orthodox Jew, could not open a telegram or anything like that. They left on a Monday, and that was the last time I've ever seen him. Just pause for a moment. [tape recorder turned off]

Living in Cuernavaca at this time was the author Willard Motley whose novel Knock on Any Door had been a



best-seller. I never met him, and at a certain point this was deliberate on my part for reasons that will be clear. An incident occurred in which Motley and some friends were seated on the veranda of an old hotel in Cuernavaca called the Bella Vista. This was a hotel in which various celebrated events had occurred, and although there were few people who used it now as a hotel, it was a fairly favorite drinking spot for people. And on the veranda one night when Motley and some friends were there, there was a woman, an American woman, who was there on vacation and who was a scientist and wanted to be sure that she would get a passport. Now, she had been one of those who had come around when Abram Wouk died. And she and her husband had been to our home for dinner, and we had taken her children swimming on a number of occasions at different spots. But now she had run into some trouble in getting a passport, for reasons I know nothing about, and this time she was having a drink on the hotel veranda with some man she knew who was a Texan. The Texan had begun to make nasty remarks about Motley because Motley was black, and then had demanded of the proprietor that he not allow Motley and the others to be on the veranda with him. And the proprietor had replied, "This is Mexico, not the United States, and anybody who wants to drink here has the right to do it. If you don't like it, you can leave." And so the



Texan and this woman left. This incident made Motley and his friends so excited and pleased that they proceeded to get very drunk, from the reports I had, and to sing various songs that came to their mind, including the communist song "The International." I have no reason to think that Motley had anything to do with the Communist movement, but the song was one that was well known, and so, out of a kind of defiance, they had sung that as well as, I suppose, "The Marseillaise" and so on. But it was noted that this song had been sung. And I subsequently heard that this woman scientist had become friends with a member of the American embassy.

And then a series of three articles appeared in the most important Mexican newspaper, Excelsior, calling for the deportation of the American Communists who were now agitating in Mexico and in Cuernavaca, and linking me and Motley, and saying that I was at a party at his house (to which I had not gone), and, I believe, linking me to the event on the porch, the singing of "The International." I am no longer able to find those articles. This was very uncomfortable especially because at this time we were trying to change our status from that of tourists to that called inmigrante, which is the equivalent of immigrant. Our sole reason for wanting to change the status was that tourists could only stay in Mexico for six months, and then if they wished to





stay longer, they had to leave the country and get a new tourist visa and come back in. This would mean that we would have to go up to Texas or go south to Guatemala. It would be a nuisance, it would involve taking our children, it would be costly. And the status of inmigrante would allow us, by posting a certain sum of money, to assure the government that we would not become public charges, would allow us to avoid these trips.

I had been introduced to a very fine man who was an attorney, Benito Noyola, and he was seeking to get this new status for us. (I might mention in passing that in Mexico the colloquial word for an attorney is coyote because so many of them indeed are unscrupulous in the way they will try to milk money out of any client. Not only that, but in Mexico--moreover in Mexico, practically omnipresent in dealings with the government is the giving of bribes which are called "bites," in Spanish morditas. The word for attorney in Mexico is licenciado, and I can only refer to him as Licenciado Noyola.) Not only was he absolutely honest in all of his dealings with clients but he refused to give a bribe to anyone. And he said, "I don't believe in it. I believe it's corrupting for the government, and I don't do it. And we will manage without it." The fascinating thing was that he always did manage without it, he was such a respected man.



Now, at one point he asked me to go to the American embassy and get a certificate of citizenship, that it was wanted by the Mexican government. And I went to the embassy, and I had some war bonds that I had purchased that I wanted to turn in because they had matured, and I showed the young lady my passport, which was an old one, an out-of-date one, but I asked for a certificate of citizenship. And because she was very busy she asked if I could come back a little later in the day when she would have typed out the numbers of all the bonds and fixed up the papers she had to. I said I would. When I came back, she gave me the proper papers for cashing the bonds and then said that the consul would like to see me. I was ushered into an office where the, I believe, consul or some official said to me that the woman who had attended to me in the morning had not known who I was and that they were not going to give me a certificate of citizenship. And I got very angry and asked whether he was trying to tell me that I was not a citizen. And he said, "No. But the State Department is not interested in facilitating your residence in a foreign country." He then asked me for my passport and, with the passport in a briefcase under my arm, I said I didn't have it, that it was with my lawyer. And we had a few more words and I left. I told this to my attorney, and he said, "Well, we'll do the best we can." And I think



we had an--I know we had, yes, an appointment for the very next morning at the Department of Interior, which opened at eight o'clock, and he said that we should be there at eight o'clock in the morning, before the American embassy could do anything, so that we could take our next step in getting the papers. Now, I don't know whether it was exactly that night--I think, no, I think it was a few days earlier that a most extraordinary coincidence occurred.

My wife and I had been taking a walk in the evening, and we passed a bookshop, and there in the window of the bookshop were about ten copies of my novel The Cross and the Arrow in its Argentinian edition. The edition had been published in Argentina a few years before, and how they happened to be in this bookshop in Mexico City, and why the owner of the bookshop had put it into the window I never found out because at that time I couldn't talk Spanish well enough. But we went there the next morning, and I bought about fifteen to twenty copies of the book (I think all that he had) because I felt that it might be of some value to me.

And the very next morning, when we went to the office of the Department of Interior, we saw on the wall, as we were waiting to be dealt with by a clerk, a note that said in effect: if Albert Maltz comes in, please notify the



American embassy . . . please call the American embassy. Which meant that the consul had hot-footed down to the Department of Interior the afternoon before in order to post this note. So we immediately left.

But I subsequently got my status because my attorney went about it in another way: he didn't give bribes but he did use the fact that, as a former attorney in the Department of Energy, I think, in hydraulics and energy, he went around introducing me to various officials in the government, several of whom later became presidents of Mexico, and giving them autographed copies of my novel. There is in Mexico great respect for people of the arts. For instance, I learned as I was learning Spanish that I was not to tell people I was a writer because that meant that I was a journalist: I was to say I was an author because that was the word that was used. And introducing me also as one of the Hollywood Ten was a factor that gave me sympathy in Mexico.

GARDNER: The nature of political exile.

MALTZ: Yes, that's right. There's a whole tradition of political exile in Latin America. I recall now that he also had me write out a statement in which I explained why I had taken the position that I had, and why I was living in Mexico. And I got the inmigrante status which was one that lasted for five years; and then, afterwards,





I got the status above that, which was--I forget the name now [inmigrado], but it not only carried the previous privileges but it allowed me to work in Mexico and allowed me, with proper permission, to own property.

In September 1951 there were again a series of hearings on Hollywood by the House Committee, and, at this time, blacklisting was also spreading all over the country in every possible area of work and life.

Among our friends in Cuernavaca at this time was a Hungarian couple, the man's pen name, by which he was known, was John Pen; His real name was Szekely. His wife, Elizabeth, had a nickname that I'll inevitably refer to, Erzi, and a daughter, Kathy, who was a friend of my daughter's. Pen's best work, perhaps, was called Temptation. He had also received an Academy award for an original film story. He and his wife and daughter came to be people I was very, very fond of. Then there were Gordon Kahn, author of The Hollywood Ten,\* who was living there, and his wife Barbara, and the Austrian doctor Ernesto Amann, and a miscellany of other people.

A good deal of my novel was written by the end of 1951. I had expected it to pour out of me--and so it seemed to come. I did interrupt the novel to write one piece for Mainstream (the successor to--well, first there

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\*Actually entitled Hollywood on Trial.



was New Masses, and then there was Masses and Mainstream, and now it was Mainstream) called "The Whiskey Men," and this was a presentation of the economics and sociology of the business of making moonshine liquor, which actually involves a vast number of people when you include those who drink it and those who try and catch the moonshiners, and the whole administration of justice in this.

In this year my foreign publication abroad was in some ten countries, with the first publication in China. And my earnings were a little under \$3,600; so I was right back to where I was when I decided to move to Hollywood.



TAPE NUMBER: XXII, SIDE ONE

DECEMBER 22, 1978

MALTZ: [tape inaudible up to this point] Odets had given me \$1,000 for the Hollywood Ten case, and later, after we came out of jail he had given the principal speech at the funeral services, or the memorial service, for Joe Bromberg, who had been a member of the Group Theatre with him for years. And yet about six months after doing this, he himself became an informer at a committee hearing and named Bromberg. His behavior was especially peculiar because there was a meeting--there was a gathering at someone's home, or a gathering, I think, at Odets's apartment the night he came back from Washington, and everyone there assumed that he had defied the committee. There was a very rollicking evening apparently, and people drinking and congratulating him, and the party lasted until early in the morning; and lategoers, those late in leaving the party, saw early copies of the New York Times in the lobby of the apartment house and saw that he had named them before the committee. It's a perfectly incredible piece of behavior. I have other stories about him, but I'll push on.

Something that both fascinated and angered me was the. . . . [tape recorder turned off] In April 1952 Edward G. Robinson appeared before the committee. Now,



he had had rather a proud history, I feel, of supporting worthwhile humane causes. And I have already stated the extent of my involvement with him, which amounted to writing several speeches for him, but nothing political. Yet, in his testimony the following occurred. [Francis E.] Walter of the committee said, "Mr. Robinson, you stated that you were duped and used. By whom?"

Robinson: By the sinister forces who were members and probably in important positions in those organizations.

Walter: Well, tell us what individuals you have reference to.

Robinson: Well, you had Albert Maltz, and you have Dalton Trumbo and you have--what is the other fellow, the top fellow who they say is the commissar out there?

Walter: John Howard Lawson?

Robinson: Yes, John Howard Lawson.

And so this is the way in which he bought back from the committee his right to continue to perform as an actor.

In late February the conviction of the Rosenbergs was upheld by the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. And I sent a letter out to about five of the most prominent nuclear scientists in the United States. The only one I had ever met was Philip Morrison, but I sent it also to Harold Urey, and to I. [Isidor] Rabi at their universities and to two others whom I forget at the moment. And what I said, in effect, was this: I said that appearing--that Harold Urey had stated that it would take about ninety volumes to put down all of the material needed for the





manufacture of an atomic weapon. And I said if that's the case, how could the Rosenbergs be guilty of giving the Soviet Union the knowledge of how to make the atomic weapon, and if they couldn't have done that, why should they die? And will you, as an atomic scientist, speak out on this? I never heard--the only one I ever heard from was Urey. And he wrote to me that what he had said was perfectly true; nevertheless there were certain concepts that perhaps could be very important if transmitted. But later he became extremely active in trying to save the Rosenbergs, and I have never known whether my letter had played any part in it. I hope that it had.

GARDNER: Will you excuse me? [tape recorder turned off]

MALTZ: As I listened to the comments of friends on my first version of my novel, I decided that I'd been too documentary in my approach. I was so close to all of the prison material, and it was all so interesting in itself, that I had used it and obscured the central story. So I sat down and revised the concept and went to work on a new draft.

The blacklist freeze in the studios was now absolutely solid, and there was no way whatsoever in which any of the blacklisted people could write anything for a major studio. Some of them did succeed in writing for independents like the King Brothers. And in existence now was the



"graylist" on which someone like Howard Koch was. Just because somebody had been mentioned, or had been mentioned by error, or whose name was like the name of someone who was mentioned, people were on a list of which they were not aware. They were not openly blacklisted and yet, in effect, were blacklisted. The book by John Cogley called Report on Blacklisting gives an excellent description of this on pages 141 and 172. And he also discusses, on page 166, the technique of getting off the blacklist, a clearance procedure that was begun in 1952 whereby individuals would have interviews with Roy Brewer or Martin Gang, an attorney, or George Sokolsky, the Hearst columnist, or with the clearance committee of the American Legion, and would write a letter; and if the disclaimers met with the approval of these individuals, they would be able to get back to work.

There was a second article by Richard English in the August 30 edition of the Saturday Evening Post on the Reds in Mexico. And this time it was myself and others who had sat around in the Bella Vista Hotel drinking pink planter's punch. I happen never to have had a pink planter's punch, but I think that English, who reportedly was an alcoholic, was probably well acquainted with it.

[laughter] The article said that we had had a dinner in a room in the hotel in which we were plotting our various activities in Mexico, and we got drunk and proceeded to walk around the room singing "The International" until



some Texans came in and cleared us out--this being his, let's say, dreamy expansion of the event that had occurred with Willard Motley. He also said that Gordon Kahn and I were disrupters in the parent-teacher association of a school in Cuernavaca because I wanted Russian taught and Kahn wanted Chinese history in the curriculum. Now, there was absolutely no way of replying to a malicious and untrue article like that because the Saturday Evening Post wouldn't publish it. I did publish a letter in the September 20 issue of the Nation in which I spoke about its fallaciousness; but, of course, what was the readership of the Nation compared to the readership of the Post? This article caused my son to quit high school, which he had just matriculated in, because he felt so miserable thinking that the others in this American high school would be pointing their fingers at him, and there was no redress for this.

On September 24, 1952, a very bizarre event occurred. My wife and daughter were on a plane going to Oaxaca to visit our friend Lini DeVries, who had moved there, and a bomb went off in the plane and tore a hole in the fuselage and knocked out all of the instruments; but the plane was able to keep flying, and my wife was injured by a piece of flying steel hitting her ankle. The doctor said later that it was like a grenade wound. And the plane almost



crashed as it ran out of fuel but finally managed to land through a cloud, through clouds that obscured the ground, at an emergency air force base. And the bomb had been placed on the plane by two characters who had hoped to get insurance for ten Mexican--for ten peasants they had sent down to a nonexistent job in Oaxaca after buying large insurance policies on their lives. It was an absolutely nutty scheme because if it had worked, the police would immediately have wanted to know who was getting the big payoffs on the insurance, and they would have been caught. But this bizarre event almost seemed to be part of what we expected in the turbulent experiences we were undergoing. We had hoped for some tranquillity, but within weeks after we reached Cuernavaca in April 1951, my wife got polio, and after she recovered from that (without damage fortunately), this was followed by the death of her best friend and then by the newspaper attacks on us. And both of our kids were not in good shape because the year I was in prison had been very bad for them, and there seemed no end to what was happening from all sides.

My wife subsequently wrote a book about these events and about the trial of the two men, and it was called Seven Shares in a Gold Mine--oh, it was not ten peasants, that's right, it was seven peasants that they had sent down . . . Seven Shares in a Gold Mine, that was published





by Simon and Schuster in 1959.

During the year, BBC did eight broadcasts of a ninety-minute radio play based on The Cross and the Arrow, and I was published once again in a good many foreign countries. I did have one exception to the lack of publication in the United States. A volume called The Best of the Best Short Stories was published and "Man on a Road" was included. My earnings that year went up to almost \$11,000 because of foreign royalties and royalties from Naked City.

In 1953 McCarthyism was riding so high that President Eisenhower campaigned in Wisconsin for McCarthy's reelection. At the same time, Charlie Chaplin was driven from the country and Thomas Mann left the country. In Czechoslovakia the dreadful Slansky trial took place in which men were framed because it was part of the Stalin era that this be carried out. I later met two of the men who survived it: one of them is a good friend, Eduard Goldstucker, who is a literary man; and the other was an Israeli who happened to be in Czechoslovakia at the time. A book was published about this trial called The Confession by Artur London, who was one of those convicted. It was published by William Morrow and Company in 1970. Stalin died in March. We thank God for that. [laughter] And the Korean War came to an end.

In March there were also hideous attacks on the film Salt of the Earth, which was being shot in New Mexico. This



was the project that Herbert Biberman directed and Paul Jarrico produced and Michael Wilson, one of the best screenwriters in the world, wrote. Representative [Donald] Jackson, of California, attacked the film as it was in production and without having read the script. He said. . . . [tape recorder turned off] He said in Congress:

"Mr. Speaker, I've received reports of the sequences filmed to date during the making of the picture, and it depicts exactly what might be expected from a group of Communists engaged in the making of a motion picture. The picture is deliberately designed to inflame racial hatreds and to depict the United States of America as the enemy of all colored peoples." This was simply not true. But he said it on the floor of Congress and, as a result, the leading actress in the film, a Mexican woman, Rosaura Revueeltas, was suddenly deported before the last scenes of the picture were shot. And so it was made clear that we were not only to be blacklisted in the film industry, but we would be prevented from doing independent movies.

In August of 1952 my family and I had moved up to a rented house in Mexico City because we wanted to put our children into school. I should have mentioned this earlier.

In June 1953 the terrible event of the execution of the Rosenbergs took place. Like so many others, we had followed every step of the last struggle to save them with



a great deal of anguish, and the day after they were executed, in a great burst of feeling, I wrote a piece that was published in the People's World. I remember that same month there was a story, actually on June 22, just a few days later, there was a story in the New York Times on the front page that the books of forty authors had been banned by the government in overseas libraries. And my book The Cross and the Arrow was one of them. Now, this had the gravest consequences for me of anything that had happened in the blacklist years because a great many librarians in the United States apparently took a hint from this and proceeded to take my books out of the libraries. For instance, when I happened to be in Boston in 1961, I discovered that although my books had been published by a Boston publisher, they were not on the shelves in the main Boston library, and one of them was listed as being accessible by special permission. And none of my books were in the Beverly Hills library when I visited here. An author can die, but his books remain in libraries to be read down the years; but if an author's books are taken out of libraries, then it's as though he never lived and wrote at all. And this was a bad blow. You want some water?

GARDNER: No, I'm okay.

MALTZ: During this summer, I finished the second version of A Long Day in a Short Life and again had it read by



some friends, and I entered into a long correspondence about it with Lloyd Brown. Brown was either a union organizer, I believe, or a Communist party organizer. I don't remember. But my book was given to him by Sam Sillen of Mainstream, and Brown, who himself was the author of an interesting novel, had various critical comments to make about the way in which I handled the black characters in my book. And I respected him and entered into a very considerable correspondence with him before beginning some further revisions. In September The Robe opened with Philip Dunne's name on it as writer. Have I made clear that he didn't know of my connection?

GARDNER: You have mentioned that.

MALTZ: Oh, I'm glad, I'm glad I asked you. It's very important to make that clear, as I didn't know at the time, but now know, that when Darryl Zanuck took on The Robe, he wanted some cuts in it and some changes. The cuts were made necessary by the fact that costs on making of films had increased enormously from the time I first wrote my script until the time when they were ready for production. And Philip Dunne was given my script without my name on it and told by the producer that it was an amalgam of so many scripts that no one could get any credit on it. He subsequently told me that if he had known that it was my script, he would not have done any





work on it. And he is, I know, a very principled man. So he did the changes that were required, and his name was on it as the writer. I had a very mixed reaction to the film. I thought the direction by Henry Koster was very stiff and lacking in earthiness. Some reviewers, like Bosley Crowther of the New York Times, agreed with me, but most of the reviews were excellent. And it was, I believe, the largest-grossing film up to the time, larger than Gone with the Wind . . .

GARDNER: Really?

MALTZ: . . . in its first . . .

GARDNER: Oh, in its initial run.

MALTZ: . . . in its initial run--some \$30 million. By today's theater prices that would be a gross well over \$120 million.

GARDNER: How much did you realize from it?

MALTZ: I finally realized, I think, about \$75,000 from it, which, of course, was very important money at that time. And during that year, a dramatization of my novel The Underground Stream played in a theater in Paris, and BBC broadcast at various times a radio play based on Simon McKeever. Cross and the Arrow came out in China, and I began a very interesting correspondence with a writer called Mao Tun. This came about because I had asked several questions of my correspondent in China, and he said they



would be answered by a writer, by another man. In the course of our correspondence, Mao Tun sent me a volume of short stories and then a novel, and I thought his short stories were marvelous. I had a discussion with him about socialist realism in which I expressed my complete dissatisfaction with this theory of literature. He defended it but in a somewhat feeble manner. And then after about three years of correspondence, I discovered that he was the Chinese minister of culture, and he hadn't let me know this. [laughter] He is, as I write, still alive and eighty-one.

GARDNER: Do you still correspond?

MALTZ: No, the correspondence ended when I came up to the United States. I had regards from him recently through another person there. But I have an idea now that his position, which I saw reflected in a newspaper article, has solidified in a way that would make us feel very differently about literature, or make us think very differently about the purpose of literature. However, from his stories, I feel sure that if we met it would be personally very pleasant.

My earnings in that year went up because of foreign royalties (and not yet anything from The Robe) to almost \$17,000, and since living at that time was about a third cheaper in Mexico than in the United States, that was a



very good living. Early in the next year I met Bruno Traven. I presume you would like some material on him.  
[laughter]

GARDNER: Yes, definitely!

MALTZ: And I met him no differently than anyone else who met him in Mexico, under the name of [Hal] Croves. Traven was a slender, small man who looked like a midwestern university professor, and who talked with a Germanic accent, talked English with a Germanic accent, and who gave no sense from his person of the kind of varied life he had lived in Mexico, which must have taken a man of great physical endurance. And the occasion for my meeting him was that he had been down in the state of Chiapas, where his novel The Rebellion of the Hanged was being filmed. Along with the company there, there was an American woman whom I knew, Elizabeth Timberman, whose husband, Charles Humboldt, I was especially friendly with, and she was there as a still photographer to take photographs of the production. She was a marvelous photographer. But there had been very heavy rains in the area so that shooting had been interrupted for several weeks. And during that time conditions of life were very difficult, under primitive circumstances, and excepting for the camera crew led by the cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa, everyone else took to a good deal of drinking. And in that period my friend



Elizabeth, who had great emotional problems and who suffered from manic-depression, became manic, and Traven took it upon himself to bring her back to Mexico City. He apparently almost suffered a disaster with her on the light plane flying them out of Chiapas. But they made it up to Mexico City, and in moments of lucidity she told him that her husband was in the States for a visit and gave him our name and address. And so he brought her to us early one morning, and we had her on our hands.

Now, I subsequently met Traven again due to the production of a film of his which Phil Stevenson wrote. And when he was dying, in 1969, I was in Mexico on a brief visit and [door bell rings]--oh, I must stop for the moment in case my wife doesn't. . . . [tape recorder turned off] Since I fell ill with turista, I realized something about Traven: that he was one of those very fortunate individuals who have a built-in resistance to any of the dysentery germs. My son was like that. My son, from the time we arrived in Cuernavaca, ate anything off the street, the very thing that was forbidden by all doctors, and he never got ill. Whereas my wife, for instance, not only got turista but got amoebic dysentery half a dozen times. And unless Traven had been immune in that way, he never would have probably survived to live and, certainly, to write, because he obviously, from his





books, lived in back areas of Mexico for a great many years. What I know about Traven comes from his very close friend, Gabriel Figueroa.

GARDNER: Did you know him as Traven, or did he. . . ?

MALTZ: No, nobody knew him as Traven. No, they only knew him as Croves. Now, even Gabriel Figueroa was so close with Traven that when Gabriel wanted to take an option on one of Traven's novels, which I worked on subsequently, they didn't need a piece of paper between them; it was just their word. And Traven bought an automobile, for instance, for the sixteenth birthday of one of Gabriel's sons. They were deeply close friends. And yet, Gabriel told me, when he went to see Traven within two or three days before his death, he continued to call him Hal Croves and never anything else. Now, the reason behind this was that Traven, although sane in every other way, had an absolutely paranoid fear that if he was known as Traven, he might still be deported to Germany and executed because of his role in an insurrection after World War I.

GARDNER: The Munich. . . ?

MALTZ: The Munich, yes, events. And he had been arrested and sentenced to death and had escaped. And for a man to carry on all down the years in that fashion is bewildering, but he nevertheless did it, and even with so close a friend as Gabriel. So that really . . . it answers the mystery



of Traven and, I'm sure, answers it correctly, because Gabriel Figueroa is a man of dignity and honor, and he just never would have told me anything like that unless it was true.

During this period we had to move from our rented house. We found another one in a most beautiful section of Mexico City called San Angel. Actually, we were about two blocks away from Diego Rivera's residence and studio, and it was an area with cobblestone streets and high walls and very attractive. It was in this year that a new American family came down to live in Mexico. I had read about them some weeks before in the Nation. Their name, as I came to know them, was Charles and Berthe Small. His name, however, from birth, and for many years before that in his work in the trade-union movement, was Smolikoff. I had read about them in the Nation because there had been some events in Miami, Florida, where, in spite of Supreme Court rulings on the Fifth Amendment, a judge in Miami had put them both in jail for taking the Fifth Amendment before a grand jury. And now, out of jail, they had come down to Mexico to be free of harassment, and we met and they became our dearest friends there. Hold up one second. [tape recorder turned off] Charles Small died this year, and I wrote a short piece about him which I will give you for inclusion with my materials. And I won't say anything more about him now.



This was a year in which the idiocies continued in their pernicious fashion in the United States, and it was also the year in which the CIA engineered a coup in Guatemala with the results that the United Fruit Company was able to get back land which it had held uncultivated and which had been given to hungry peasants in the country to cultivate. And ever since this "great" coup, which was fallaciously called an anti-Communist coup, the jails of Guatemala have been full and the torturers have been busy. Actually, the government in Guatemala at that time was about as Left as the Roosevelt government, but it did make the error of saying that uncultivated land should be cultivated, and so Foster Dulles and Allen Dulles ran to the rescue, and we in Mexico City helped finance some of the refugees who came.

I completed my novel in this year, and I sent it out at once to Little, Brown and Company, which had published my three previous novels, and they rejected it. I had expected that they would reject it because they had already fired the chief editor, Angus Cameron, and dropped other writers on their list. And so I had had a secretary make many copies so that I could send it out to foreign countries. By this time I no longer had my agent Maxim Lieber, who had retired from the business since he too had been mentioned--in his case by . . . oh, that character



in the Hiss case . . . Whittaker Chambers had mentioned Lieber and a great many of his authors had immediately deserted him, including Erskine Caldwell, and so Lieber was now in Mexico. And since those were the days before Xerox machines, my secretary had to type many times in order to get seventeen--in order to get the copies that I sent out to foreign countries.

In the course of the next two years I got seventeen rejections from American publishers while getting sixteen contracts with foreign countries. And finally, when my agent (another agent I had just for the United States) told me that he didn't think he could get a publisher, I gave it to International Publishers so that at least my friends could read it. It sold less than a thousand copies, I think, but it did have a small book club sale of a Left book club that took about 3,000 or 4,000 copies. I think I might mention that the agent in New York who handled the book for the United States was about the fourth agent I had tried. All others declined to take the book, and this man, whose name was Ivan Von Auw, was someone I had known when he was an executive of the Authors League. And I want to pay my respects to him for his courage.

I had, like everyone else, to work out a philosophy in order to live the blacklist years without bitterness. Now, some were not very successful in this--for instance,





Adrian Scott was not. Adrian was a bitter man about the blacklist although it didn't mar his personal sweetness as a human being. But it was very necessary for me to find a philosophy with which I could be comfortable, and I had this attitude toward it: I felt that only two years after the defeat of German fascism, and only one year after the Nuremberg trials, we in the Ten had found ourselves in a fight against an American fascism; and that if I had been a Frenchman and, let's say, had had the principle and courage to join the resistance movement during the war, I might have been dead or ended in a gestapo torture chamber, and that this was all part of the same world struggle, and that blacklisting was a very minor price which we in America had had to pay for joining in that struggle. It is the philosophy on which I still lean today, I find. Because, while I don't regret the stand I took and would do the same thing over, I do regret that I was not permitted to do the work that I feel was in me to do. And, of course, it has not been lost on any of us who were blacklisted then, who were casualties of those years, how the Watergate conspirators came out. A short time ago I watched Ehrlichman being interviewed by Dick Cavett, and the books that they have written, the money they have earned for committing perjury and obstruction of justice, and so on, is quite a contrast to the way we



were treated. It's not been lost on me, either, that the Soviet Union has been using the weapon of job blacklisting --and worse--on its dissidents. One of the things I determined in those years was that I would never be party to the blacklist of anybody, no matter what their political position.



TAPE NUMBER: XXII, SIDE TWO

JANUARY 3, 1979

MALTZ: I published an article "The Law Behind McCarthy" in the English magazine the New Statesman and Nation. I can't remember now why the author was "an American correspondent" and why it was done anonymously, but it was republished in a dozen countries. I did have a publication of one short story in the United States because of an anthology which was called [The Pocket Book of O'Henry Prize Stories ], and mine could not be left out.

But nothing else was published. And in that year I earned about \$30,000 from The Robe and foreign royalties. And at that time I had much more economic security than most of the blacklisted writers I knew about. I had, of course, an outlet with foreign countries for my fiction writing. This is, I think, a relevant moment to put on record the true severity of the blacklist for people who had previously worked in films.

The blacklist that started in April 1951 finally embraced some 250 individuals who had worked in the film industry. They came from many categories: craft workers and technicians, secretaries, readers, public relations, agents, set designers, cartoonists, musicians and composers, story editors, directors, producers, and writers. Of these, only the writers could do their work alone and at



home; all of the others had to pass through the studio gates by the nature of their work. And no one of them ever did. They were all out . . . absolutely out. Among actors, for instance, this included two Academy award winners, Gale Sondergaard and Ann Revere, and such well-known actors, who were always in demand previously, as Morris Carnovsky, J. Edward Bromberg, Howard Da Silva, Victor Killian, Lionel Stander, Elliott Sullivan, Dorothy Tree, Lloyd Gough, Karen Morley, Jeff Corey. It was not until ten to fifteen years had passed that some of them got film work again.

Now, the writers were the largest category of black-listees. A myth has grown up that they all went on writing merrily at their usual salaries, but under other names. This was absolutely not so. In the year 1954, for instance, blacklisted writers whom I personally knew were earning a living, such as it was, in the following occupations: bartender, Ned Young; commercial fisherman, Harold J. Smith (these two men were to write under pseudonyms, or Ned Young under a pseudonym, The Defiant Ones, in 1958);\* stage manager in a night club, Alvah Bessie; office clerk, Lester Cole; maitre d' in a hotel, Robert Lees; salesman for a wholesale-paper house, Fred Rinaldo (those two, Lees and Rinaldo, were responsible for most of the big successes of

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\* Young as Nathan E. Douglas, Smith under his own name.





the Abbott and Costello films); TV repair shop, Edward Hubesch; printing shop, Louise Rousseau; camera shop, Val Burton.

The only writers who were doing films under cover at this time that I know about were Dalton Trumbo and Michael Wilson. They were doing them together and getting \$3,000 a script instead of \$75,000. But then Wilson got a passport by the accident that he had a first name that he hadn't used in film writing, and he went abroad and then was able to work under much better terms. Along the way, after several years, Ring Lardner Jr., and Ian Hunter were able to collaborate on a TV series, "Robin Hood," because the producer was in England and she wanted to use them. What did open up in New York and then in L.A. after several years for some writers was TV under other names. TV was a new operation, and the close watch on who the individuals were was not the same as it was in films. And TV did provide work and a kind of living for some writers, but certainly not all. In short, the blacklist was a devastating blow to all who suffered it. And for some it meant that they never again worked in the film industry. It was about this time that the Writers Guild completely capitulated to the executives and to the blacklist by voting that the name of any uncooperative witness could be removed from a script even if he had written it before he appeared before the congressional committee. Michael Wilson's name, for instance, had been on A Place in the Sun,



for which he won an Academy award, on Five Fingers and other films, but was not on the Friendly Persuasion, even though he had written it before he was blacklisted.

In the year 1955, submissions and rejections of A Long Day in a Short Life continued in the United States. I began work on a short story and research for a play about Victor Hugo. It was the first time I had wanted to write a play in some twenty years. Around this time I met Diego Rivera for the first time and confirmed at once what I had already heard--that he loved to tell whopping lies. This was a peculiarity that he had. And during this time (he was then, I think, perhaps, in his late sixties) I watched him paint from 7:30 in the morning until 7:30 at night doing the mural on the outside of a theater on a boulevard in Mexico City that I had occasion to travel on frequently. And I remember once being at a party where I left at about midnight, and I was told that he continued there until three in the morning, dancing and kissing the hand of every girl he danced with, but he was out at 7:30 the next morning anyway. His studio was about two blocks from my home. It was on the second floor of a building with a skylight instead of a roof. The particular feature of his studio was that he had about a dozen Judas figures which were made of papier maché and were eight to ten feet tall. These are figures that in Mexico are wound with firecrackers



at Eastertime and blown up as a symbol of destroying Judas. But he liked them as an example of ethnic art and had them around in his studio. I never knew him well. I met a number of other Mexican artists at this time who became my friends, and I saw not a little of them; among them were Jose Chavez Morado, who had begun drawing as a Mexican wetback around campfires at night in the United States where he was a crop worker. And others--I think there's no point in just listing their names.

It was in this year that there was a publication of a monumental work, The Judgment of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg by John Wexley. Since we were then in a period of tremendous repression, it stands as an example of the enormous value of a free press in any society. Because, even though no major publisher took the book, it was published by a small, let's say, publisher of dissident works, Cameron and Kahn, this being Angus Cameron who had been fired from Little, Brown, and Albert Kahn, a Communist writer who had had a number of best-sellers in the thirties. And this book by Wexley, which indicted the FBI, which indicted Judge Kaufman in the Rosenberg case, and the prosecutors, nevertheless was published and did find its way to readers by its sheer power and by word of mouth. It was the beginning of the trend toward the wider acceptance of the fact that the Rosenbergs were innocent. The book involved an enormous



amount of research and great cerebral power on the part of the author. I know that after reading it I was so profoundly impressed and moved by it that I wrote people about it, and I wrote an article in the National Guardian that was published in 1956. I want to. . . . [tape recorder turned off]

This same year an attorney, Marshall Perlin, came down to Mexico and came to see me on the case of Morton Sobell, who had been tried with the Rosenbergs and sentenced to thirty years in prison. Perlin wanted to get more data on the question of Sobell's illegal apprehension and kidnapping in Mexico City by secret police acting for the U.S. embassy. In fact, the United States and Mexico did not at that time, and perhaps still do not, have a treaty of extradition. And so in the case of Sobell, and it has happened with others, when the United States wants someone who is in Mexico, it pays certain members of the Mexican secret police to do something without the knowledge of the Mexican government; or perhaps it may be with the knowledge of the government--I don't know. [tape recorder turned off]

In the case of Sobell, the secret police agents rang his doorbell one evening, and when he answered it, they just grabbed him and hustled him by force into a car and drove without stopping up to the border at Nuevo Laredo





and walked him onto the bridge that is between the two countries and there pushed him into the arms of waiting FBI agents. And Perlin wanted data on this and to try to get evidence of the kidnapping. I invited various of the left-wing Americans I knew there to my home, and Perlin talked to them, and we raised some money for him to work at this.

GARDNER: He was from New York.

MALTZ: He was from New York, yes. And I might mention that he is still today working with the two Rosenberg sons to prove their parents' innocence. This has been steady for him since, say, 1955, at least.

One example of the--one footnote about the blacklist: my literary agent Maxim Leiber had come down to Mexico around the year 1952, I believe, because, having been mentioned by Whittaker Chambers, he found his clients leaving him and was no longer able to carry on business. But he found that in Mexico he had nothing to do, and he was going out of his mind with boredom. Since he had been born in Poland, it occurred to him that he might be able to function in the publishing industry there as someone who knew American and English literature, and he went to the Polish consulate and set up contacts. And as a result, in the year 1955 he and his wife and children moved to Poland. There he did function with several publishers,



and I saw him there in 1959, which I'll mention. But it's very interesting that by 1962 he returned to the United States in disgust at the society he'd found there.

During this year, the House Committee on Un-American Activities investigated twenty-seven members of the New York theatrical world, and individuals like Zero Mostel were blacklisted. Two men, Pete Seeger and my friend Elliott Sullivan, took the First Amendment for the first time since we went to the stand, and that was an exciting development. Since I may forget to mention it in the future, on different grounds neither man ever went to prison. But it was not for a basic constitutional reason.

By this time of my residence in Mexico I was getting a real awareness of the meaning of the word motherland in respect to one's work. Although I was being published very widely in foreign countries, it just didn't mean the same thing to me as being published in the United States. In 1956, in the spring, there was the comedy of an Academy Award being given to the writer of the film The Brave One, and the only name to turn up was one Robert Rich; but nobody turned up in person, and it became clear to the assembled audience that it had been written by someone on the blacklist. After a while, it became generally assumed that it was Dalton Trumbo who had written this script, as indeed it was, but this did not break the



blacklist. Trumbo continued on it for another four years.

I'll now turn to an event that had the most profound consequences for me, and that was the secret report of Khrushchev in February '56 to the twentieth congress of the Communist party. It was published in the New York Times on June 2. I want to read from The World Since 1939 by Carroll Quigley,\* page 357: "All of the rest which the fellow travelers throughout the world had been denying for a generation poured out: the enormous slave labor camps, the murder of innocent persons by tens of thousands, the wholesale violation of law, the use of fiendishly planned torture to exact confessions for acts never done, or to involve persons who were completely innocent, the ruthless elimination of whole classes and of whole nations such as the army officers, the kulaks and the Kalmuk, Chechen, Ingush and Balkar minority groups. The servility of writers, artists and everyone else, including all party members, to the tyrant was revealed, along with a total failure of his agricultural schemes, his cowardice and incompetence in the war, his insignificance in the early history of the party, and his constant rewriting of history to conceal these things."

The shock effect of this report on me, and I know on many others, was absolutely disemboweling. I can indicate one aspect of its effect by saying that for six months I

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\*Part II of Tragedy and Hope



could do no writing. I tried to digest the meaning of these revelations, and to ponder them, and to ask why they had happened and what sort of society and governmental system had allowed them to happen. I went back to the Marxist classics to see what clues they could offer me, and I also read every word published by commentators, Left and Right, on these revelations.

And it was not only I who was affected in this way. I want to read from A Long View from the Left by Al Richmond, page 367: "Words for reactions in Communist ranks were used by very political men: 'Shock . . . pain' (Dennis)," and by Togliatti of Italy, "surprise . . . grief . . . bewilderment . . . perturbation . . . " Says Richmond: "It might appear odd to invoke their descriptions of such intimate feelings, and yet I quote them to stress the universality of these responses. To tell how searing one man's pain was, how anguished his perturbation, may be trivial in itself; the difficult remembrance has its true validity only as evocation of what went on within millions of Communists the world over when they were suddenly confronted with the nightmare of terror, suspicion, fear, megalomania, and cruel caprice that Khrushchev unveiled. Their trauma reflected the political and ethical impulses that motivated them, for to speak of pain and bewilderment is also to speak of confrontation with things abhorrent





and alien. Not that the reactions were uniform but the chords above were widespread." [tape recorder turned off]

One of the results of the report was that a great many people left the Communist party, or if they had been, let's say, sympathizers, left its orbit. I emerged from this period of thought and emotional turmoil with quite a number of conclusions. Among them were the following: first, that it was nonsense to speak of Marxism as a science. It was the custom of Communist parties to do this. But the events in the Soviet Union had demonstrated that it certainly wasn't a science. Two, [I came to] the conclusion that Stalin could clearly not have grown to be the tyrant he was, or committed the horrors he did, unless the political system permitted it. The official Soviet characterization of the Stalin era as the cult of personality was a way for me of sweeping the problem under the rug. It did not answer the crucial questions of what in the social fabric and political system permitted this so-called cult of personality to grow and flourish, and to imprison, torture, and murder millions of innocent Soviet citizens dedicated to the welfare of their country. Actually, the Khrushchev report and others that followed did not nearly reveal the full damage done by Stalin, as was subsequently revealed by a Soviet historian, Roy Medvedev, in Let History Judge, published by Knopf in the seventies.



Third, I concluded that no society could have any real freedoms if the press and other media of communication were owned by the government. This is not to say that I previously had been unaware that there was no freedom of press and speech and political activity in the Soviet Union in the way that we cherish them in the United States. But I had postponed final judgment on the matter because of Russian history and the belief that these freedoms would evolve as the country grew stronger and less afraid of attack by the capitalist nations. But now I no longer postponed judgment because it seemed to me clear that the dictatorship of the proletariat inevitably transformed itself in practice into the dictatorship of a handful of men at best, and of one man at worst. Under such a system free speech and press and political rights would never develop because it was so exceedingly comfortable to rule without them. These conclusions did not turn me away from the ideals of a world without exploitation of man by man, and it did not change my belief that a planned economy made much more sense than an unplanned one. But it did make a profound difference in my attitudes toward the socialist countries. From then on, the form of government in all existing socialist countries was unacceptable to me. I also felt that what had occurred in the Soviet Union was the greatest tragedy in all of human history, a much greater tragedy than the



murder of people in the Nazi holocaust because the Nazis had made clear that they had certain enemies that they wanted to get rid of whereas in Soviet society, with its magnificently proclaimed ideals, there was such gross hypocrisy hidden behind the ideals in what was done by individual to individual! In addition, the Soviet Union with its ideals embodied all that mankind, I think, had hoped for down the centuries, and that this should have been betrayed in such a terrible and needless fashion was what made it the greatest tragedy in human history. However, this did not make me feel, as I know it did others, that I had thrown away three decades of my life in taking the political positions I had.

To go to a quite different experience, I learned something about Catholicism due to one trip in Mexico that I had never understood before, and I think it is useful to put on record. In the city of Puebla there is now a museum that's called the Secret Convent. Around the year 1870 President Juárez of Mexico ordered the abolition of all secret monasteries and convents. There were practical reasons for this, as it was explained to me. For instance, let's say that a brother and a sister were due to inherit the estates of parents. It had happened more than once that the brother maneuvered to have the sister put into a convent which was a closed convent and like a prison,



and the sister could never emerge, and he took over her part of the estate. Or parents discovered that a daughter was pregnant and promptly had her transferred to a secret convent from which she never emerged, and where the child was either brought up or, from the testimony of many bones found in the secret convent when it was opened in 1934, perhaps left to die. It was very fascinating, architecturally, to enter the secret convent from a small secret door in another house and to discover then an extremely large area involving gardens, involving place for quite a number of people, and backing up to a church where the nuns could sit on one side and listen to the ceremony without being seen by anyone on the other side. And to realize that the entire neighborhood had had to cooperate with this convent for about sixty years or else its secrecy could not have been maintained because food had to be brought in, and garbage had to be taken out, and firewood, and so on.

But there was one aspect about it that struck me most forcibly. The sisters ate, in pleasant weather, in a balcony area where the walls were hung with paintings of saints, female saints, being tortured in the most horrible way by Romans. For instance, I remember one female whose breast was being torn off with pincers by Roman soldiers. Now, to have human beings, albeit nuns, eat in such surroundings struck me as being . . . as having an





extraordinary emphasis upon the macabre in this religion. And then we were led to a basement where there was an altar and where it was dark except for candles that would be lit. And there, there was a clothes rack on which hair shirts were hung, and there were crowns of thorns, and there were whips. We were told that the nuns would come down, remove their garments, put on hair shirts, press crowns of thorns into their scalps and then flagellate themselves with whips as they kneeled before the altar. And there was a painting of Christ on the cross. It occurred to me that I knew of no major religion in the world which stressed death in the way that Catholicism did. In the history of the life of Jesus, it would have been possible to make as a symbol for the church his Sermon on the Mount, and he could have been represented as a teacher speaking to people. But it was not that: it was Christ suffering on the cross that was emphasized. And it was His pain that was being revered and extolled as that which others, if they were to be most holy, would similarly try to suffer. There is nothing comparable to this that I ever read about in Hinduism, Muhammedenism, Shintoism, or any other religion, and I just found it tremendously revelatory.

In late October there came the uprising in Hungary, which was certainly a popular uprising against a repressive



Stalinist regime. It was crushed by Russian troops, of course, and the Russians asserted that fascist elements from Berlin had been poised, waiting for the uprising, and had rushed in to be part of it. As a matter of fact, when I was in Hungary in '59, only three years later, I met an American Communist, who had been a trade unionist and had been deported from the United States, who told me that in that uprising he "knew" that arms had come in from the outside. And he "knew" that very quickly anti-Semitic slogans had been raised by agitators in the crowd. And that may all be true, but it doesn't change the fact that masses of people and a portion of the army, at least, were part of that uprising. You could send in all the arms you wanted into Beverly Hills, but I think you wouldn't get an uprising of people in Beverly Hills against their mayor. And that's the difference.

In this year, 1956, the first of three foreign editions of--the first three foreign editions of A Long Day in a Short Life came out. And I wrote a play about Victor Hugo in this year, and my agent started submitting it to New York producers.

GARDNER: Did you have any hope of production?

MALTZ: Yes, I could have hope of production because the theater was not in a state of absolute blacklist at all. The theater was composed of individual entrepreneur producers,



and in spite of the investigation that occurred in the year before that I referred to, it was still perfectly possible that if someone had the interest and the courage and the money to put on a play by me, he would be free to do it. I can't say I felt optimistic, but it was worth submitting to see what would happen.

In 1957 I did my first film work\* since 1949, and it came about by accident. A film was being shot in both English and Spanish because the producer, a man called Olallo Rubio, had gotten enough money to hire some American actors as well as Mexican actors. The screenplay had been written by an American, and the producer hoped to have a world market for it. But the screenplay was being rewritten during the production, and after three weeks of shooting, the screenplay writer quit the picture after a quarrel with the producer and went back to the United States. And so the production was left in an absolutely desperate situation. I got telephone calls and telegrams asking if I would come to their rescue, and out of a feeling that I had of gratitude to Mexico for giving me residence there, I got on a plane and read the screenplay on my way to the West Coast. They were shooting in the state of Sinaloa and in a town called Topolobampo. This town was a small fishing village on a beautiful bay, but without any water, so that water had to be brought in by tank car from another

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\* Flor de Mayo



town twelve miles away.

The screenplay was quite bad. But I saw, I thought, some ways of patching it together so that it could make sense. And when I arrived, I gave thoughts to--presented my thoughts to the director and producer, and they accepted them and I started to work. The American actors in it were Jack Palance and Paul Stewart, and there were two outstanding, or two very popular, Mexican actors, Pedro Armendariz and Maria Felix. They waited for about a week while I wrote and I had to keep what they had already shot, or part of it. And by a combination of hard work and luck, with the camera always about a day and a half behind me, I worked out a screenplay that held together. It was certainly not anything that I would have chosen to do.

It was written under the most extraordinary circumstances because the only place I and the cast had to stay in was a fish cannery. And we were in a little bungalow--I was in a little room which was a single motel room with a bath--where there was a shower, not a bath. And as the weeks went on into June, it became so hot there that I would sit all day in a pair of swim trunks and about every twenty minutes--oh, I had a very large fan in the room that went twenty-four hours a day--and every twenty minutes or so I would walk into a cold shower, which was tepid, of course, and turn on the water and not dry off,





but come out and dry my hands and face only, and sit down and go back to work. And that was the only way in which I could survive the heat.

GARDNER: Amazing.

MALTZ: Pardon?

GARDNER: It's amazing.

MALTZ: It was fantastic. And so that was a five-week seminightmare, but there I got to be acquainted with Gabriel Figueroa, the cameraman, cinematographer, who is a most admirable man and who remained a friend.

During that summer I got an offer to have my Hugo play produced from a man I had known for years who was functioning as a stage manager on Broadway. And he said he had backing for it. But by then I had received some comments on the play, and I felt it needed more work. So I revised my concept and wrote another version, and by the time I finished the new version, my friend had lost his financial backing. My agent continued submitting it, but there were no other takers.

In this year there was a series of events that affected the left-wing American community in Mexico. The first had to do with Alfred and Martha Stern. Alfred Stern was a man originally of Chicago with considerable inherited wealth. He was, I know, interested in public housing and very knowledgeable in the field apparently. He had been associated



with liberal and left-wing causes in New York. I was sure that he had never been a Communist party member by things I came to know about him. Martha, his wife, was the daughter of a former ambassador to Germany, Dodd. She had been a young woman at the time that her father [William Edward Dodd] was ambassador, and she was very attractive so that she was taken out by German officers, and she had an opportunity to see what was going on somewhat from the inside. When they left Germany, she wrote a book called Through Embassy Eyes, which was very antifascist and which became a best-seller. At a certain point around 1953 they moved down to Mexico. They had one young son. And they settled down there in a very expensive apartment and began to collect Mexican art. Martha was writing, and I don't think Alfred was doing anything, particularly, except taking care of his private affairs and getting very interested in Mexican archaeology and so on.



TAPE NUMBER: XXIII, SIDE ONE

JANUARY 3, 1979

MALTZ: I had not known Alfred and Martha in the States and never came to know them intimately in Mexico, but I did see them and we had cordial relations. In the summer of this year, 1957, my wife and I visited them in Cuernavaca one day and spent the afternoon with them. They were at that time building a very large house in Cuernavaca. Alfred took me aside, and, as I best recall, he asked whether I knew if someone resident in Mexico had to answer a grand jury subpoena. I did know the answer to that because, a year or two before, I had received (I think I had this . . . well, this may be a duplication of something that's already in) a telegram from the McCarran committee of the Senate telling me that I was under subpoena to appear before them by a certain date. I got in touch with my attorney, and he said that I did not have to honor a subpoena from a congressional committee when I was living in another country--but that if it had been a subpoena from a grand jury, I would have had to respond to it. And Alfred and Martha had received a subpoena from a grand jury in either New York or Washington. I don't recall whether it was on that day or later that I learned what was involved. There was a music composer and a would-be producer of films in Hollywood called Boris Morros.



He had done the music for a couple of films, and he was charging that Stern had been in a business with him, a music publishing business, and that this was a cover for espionage, and that he himself was a double agent. Now, Stern told me that he had indeed been in a publishing business with Morros briefly, but that he hadn't liked the way in which Morros had been conducting the business. I think Stern had put up the capital and Morros was in charge of it. And he had sued Morros and had collected in court-- had gotten a jury decision in his favor and had collected in court. But it was this business that Morros asserted was the cover. Cedric Belfrage, on page 265 of his book, says about Morros that he "introduced himself to spy aficionados as a piano and cello prodigy who had conducted the Tsar's imperial orchestra at 16, and at 22 had come to America as musical director of Balieff's Chauve-Souris for which he composed The Parade of the Wooden Soldiers. On a return visit to the old country in 1945 the Russians had asked him to spy for them, and he had reported this to Hoover. In 1950 Hoover had sent him back as a counterspy and a Russian secret-police general had 'wined and dined me for ten hours straight.' The Roman-candle headlines for Morros flickered out after Balieff's widow said he had neither been Chauve-Souris's musical director nor composed the Wooden Soldiers."





Now, the Sterns, I know, tried to stay in Mexico, but finally the pressure on the Mexican government from the U.S. government became too strong. And then I learned that they had left the country and found out, in the course of a little time, that they apparently had bought a Paraguayan passport. And with that they had taken off and gone to Czechoslovakia, where they were given residence permits. I know that I was absolutely convinced that the one thing Alfred Stern could not have been was a spy. I wouldn't have said the same thing about Martha Dodd, not that I thought she was, but perhaps she had it within her to be many kinds of things. But Stern was such an anxious man that he never could have embarked upon something so anxiety-producing as spying. When he came down to Mexico, for instance, he asked me and other Americans to recommend a physician, and we all recommended the same physician, an American resident there whom we had been using. But Stern went around to about ten physicians with his medical records, sounding out all of them anxiously until they all wanted to get rid of him; none of them wanted to handle him, he was such an anxious guy. And I just knew that such a person could not have been a spy. [laughter]

But I do believe that the Sterns were being set up to be another Rosenberg case. They would have been perfect for it. Here was a woman whose father had been an ambassador, he was a wealthy Jewish guy--it was a perfect



combination. Oh, and they were both on the Left; they both had had a history of supporting the Labor party in New York and various left-wing causes.

The second event that affected the community was an article in Time magazine which appeared in its issue of September 1, 1957. It was headed by photographs of Frederick Vanderbilt Field, whom I have spoken of before as having spent six months in prison, and his former wife, whom the article did not designate as his former wife, and of myself. I know that the pose that they chose for both Field and myself was one designed to make us look extremely sinister, and, in addition, the photographs were so touched up as to darken our complexions. The story added up to the phony conclusion on the part of the article which read as follows:

On the fringes of the Communist upper crust drift several hundred fellow U.S. Communists and fellow travelers of lesser rank. Bearded and beardless, they idle away the hours in avant-garde jazz cellars, drink tequila, and loaf. But the top-line expatriates live well. Most of them rent comfortable, well-staffed houses in Mexico City or the flower-splashed resort town of Cuernavaca, talk art in stately houses set amid the ancient colonial towers and belfries of San Miguel de Allende. Shying away from publicity, they entertain one another at dinner and avoid noisy nightclubs. They operate businesses in travel, real estate, even eggs.

Now, I don't know what the Time magazine writer was thinking of in travel--oh, I think I do know. There was a left-wing couple down there, the man was nearly blind, and his wife



had a kind of hanger-on job with a travel agency in which she was able to pick up a few pesos by guiding people to it. And they were living on minimum funds, and so this was the travel thing. Now, the eggs was fascinating. Because there was a small egg farm being operated by a blacklisted physicist and a blacklisted builder from Miami--a builder whom I will talk about presently--and they had gone into this in desperation to earn a living and were getting a precarious income from it. So this was called an egg business.

They clip coupons or live on fat inheritances. A few are reported involved in genuine cloak-and-dagger plotting under the command of Urey Popperov, who is cultural attaché of the suspiciously oversized Soviet embassy in Mexico City and reputedly the working boss of all active Communists in Mexico.

All this reputed, reputed, reputed and nothing else. One thing that came out of this was a legal suit that Time settled because they had mentioned, as a gathering place for the colony of Communists, "the spacious home of Sterling Dickinson, U.S.-born director of art-conscious San Miguel de Allende's biggest art school. A resident of Mexico for twenty-odd years, he keeps open house for Communists and fellow travelers." Well, Dickinson, whom none of us knew, was a Catholic very friendly with the archbishop, having absolutely nothing to do with politics of any sort and especially not left-wing American



Communists or left-wing Americans. And he sued Time magazine and got a settlement on it. But of course none of us that Time mentioned was able to sue, but here we were being wrapped up in a mantle of probably being spies for the Soviet embassy in Mexico.

This article was perhaps part of a somewhat larger campaign that might have been orchestrated by the American State Department and culminated in the kidnapping of two members of our community in December. One was. . . . Want to hold it a second? [tape recorder turned off] One was Sam Novick. He was a businessman who had been a manufacturer in Chicago. He was one of those unusual businessmen who were sympathetic to the Left, and I gather that he had been a contributor to left-wing causes. And when the Truman-McCarthy era started, various kinds of pressures had been put on him and things done to interfere with the way he was conducting his business, and he sold it or closed out and came down to Mexico. At the time I knew him, he had started a small firm to manufacture flashlight batteries, and that's what he was doing. The second man was Max Shlafrock. He had been a carpenter, originally, who worked up to be a builder in Miami. And there he had built, among other things, a certain number of public schools. He also had been left-wing in his sympathies, and in the late forties, contracts began to





be pulled out from under him, and mortgages that he had expected were denied him, and so his business folded and he came down to Mexico also. In Mexico he was really in very great financial difficulties and had ended up about this time in the small chicken farm on the outskirts of Mexico with another man. Each man was picked up on the street by Mexican secret police.

As we learned the next day, it was a completely extra-curricular kidnapping because there was no official data on it, there was no order for it in the Department of the Interior. And the only way we knew it was because the secret-police agents, feeling complete confidence in themselves, I imagine, drove each man to his home to pick up, I guess, toothbrush and pajamas, and to tell his family that he was being deported. Now, if this fake deportation had succeeded, more than likely J. Edgar Hoover would have announced their expulsion from Mexico for spy activities, and then the various congressional committees would have jumped on them, and this would have laid the ground for doing the same with other individuals. So our small community mobilized more or less in my home, and we went to work to try and stop it.

One phase of our work was to get American attorneys who could be trusted to try and work from their end, and I called Ben Margolis and got the names of two lawyers in



Texas who were members of the Lawyers Guild. And a second phase was to try and get a lawyer in Mexico City who could reach into the presidency and tell what was going on. And what we wanted to get was something in the Mexican legal system called an amparo. Mexico does not have habeas corpus in the way we do, but it does have a kind of a preventative writ that one can obtain in certain situations from a judge. An amparo will say that so-and-so cannot be arrested unless the people who want to arrest him come before the judge and prove that they have the right to arrest him. This prevents arbitrary arrests on the part of the police. We set out to try and get an amparo to prevent arbitrary deportation of these two men without a hearing before a judge. And I remember remaining up until three o'clock in the morning one night writing a letter to ex-President Lázaro Cárdenas, whom some of our Mexican friends could reach, in the hope of getting him to intervene on this.

The result was that, after three weeks and the expenditure of about \$10,000, we succeeded in preventing the deportation. I remember going with a few others once to see a most important lawyer who was going to be the one who could reach into the office of the presidency and talk, perhaps not to him personally, but to his private secretary. It was a cold day in December, and when we went



to see him in his home, he was in his office in his large old house, and he had a few electric heaters burning in the room and he was wearing an overcoat, as we wore overcoats, because in Mexico practically no houses have any central heating. And here was this well-known, successful lawyer, conducting business in an overcoat. But we were able to get the men back and prevent the deportation. And after this I myself never went out of the house without carrying \$200 in cash and \$500 in traveler's checks so that if I were ever snatched and deported, I would not be left penniless wherever I landed.

In November of that year I got my first offer since 1948 (that was nine years) to work on a piece of film material for a Hollywood film. And this was made possible because the director, David Miller, wanted to do a historical novel called Silver Nutmeg written by Nora Lufts. It so happens that Miller's very first film-directing job was my short story "The Happiest Man on Earth," for MGM. And Miller is perhaps best known for the Dalton Trumbo script he directed called Lonely Are the Brave, with Kirk Douglas. United Artists had bought the book for Miller, either bought or optioned it, and since United Artists was a loose outfit in the way they operated, it was possible for Miller to hire me at a low figure. Actually, I think his attorney put up the money. He worked through the Paul Kohner Agency. I fell in love with the material and



wanted to do it, although it would require months of research before I could start writing. It was a story set in the seventeenth century in the Far East at a time when the Dutch were the most powerful seafarers in the world and controlled most of the Eastern spice trade. It was a story of both love and of a revolt of natives against their Dutch masters. And I felt it could be a very good film. I was extremely naive about the contract I signed, because I had never done any speculative writing before. I merely assumed that I would write a good screenplay and that the movie would be made; but in fact Miller was getting a top screenwriter to do a major film project for \$7,000 plus great expectations. On the free market at that time I would have gotten anywhere from a low minimum of 75,000 up.

Miller did have someone who would do research for me, and I went to work. One important clause of the contract left the date of my completion open-ended. I didn't have to work on it exclusively. I ought to mention I wouldn't have undertaken it at all if I weren't beginning to need money. My reserves were dwindling, and in the past several years my earnings also had been dwindling. I signed the contract with a pseudonym that I used on certain other works subsequently, John B. Sherry. My mother's maiden name was Sherry.

In this year, 1957, A Long Day in a Short Life was published in the United States by International Publishers.





I had come to the point where I felt I would like to have it read by my friends at least, although it only sold 700 hardback covers, hardback copies, and outside of the left-wing press and several black newspapers, there were no reviews. Whereas in England (it came out in the same year) it was reviewed quite well by the main newspapers, and it was only crapped on by Dwight MacDonald in Encounter magazine, which was later revealed to be financed by the CIA.

In December Diego Rivera died of prostate cancer. He had gone in the summer, I believe, or spring, to Russia for treatment there; he returned on a hot night with a photograph taken of him as he stood on the top step of the exit from the plane with a big cossack fur hat on. He pronounced that he was cured--something, I was told, which put the Russian embassy people in a tizzy because they had been advised that he wasn't cured. And he wasted away and died in December.

The tribute to him by the people was extraordinary. Since his studio was so close, I went there in the morning and found it absolutely packed with people; and by midday, his body, in a casket, was on one of the levels of Bellas Artes, the very large building in which there was the concert hall for the Mexican philharmonic, and in which there were . . . [tape recorder turned off] . . . in which there



were several floors containing paintings and murals. It was the custom in Mexico that when someone very celebrated died, the body would be left in Bellas Artes in state for a day or two with an honor guard, and with the public having the right to walk past the body and view it. The honor guard was there and kept being changed every ten or fifteen minutes, and there were all the intellectuals of Mexico and ex-presidents and so on [who] were eager to take their place by the bier. During the middle of the day, the lobby of the very large building was full of well-dressed, important people who could afford to take off from their work and come there. But as the late afternoon came and the evening, the composition of the people on the line began to change. One began to see working people: women with children in their rebozos, because they had no one with whom to leave the little ones, and other little ones holding onto their hands; students with books; men coming from factories, which was very clear by the way they looked. And the line lengthened until it was not only down the whole of one block but around the side of another block. It was bitterly cold for Mexico: the temperature might have been, at that time, about twenty degrees. But when I left at eleven o'clock at night, the line still stretched way around to a second block. Nothing like this happens in the United States when an artist dies--and by artist I can include someone who works in the theater or a writer.



There simply is no cultural tradition for that kind of an outpouring of people.

GARDNER: The first thing that comes to my mind is Elvis Presley. But that's. . . .

MALTZ: No, but that's good, that's good. Elvis Presley, that's all right. Because Elvis--that's a very good point. Because in our country then, let's say, the death of someone like Presley has a meaning to people on a broad level. But it's interesting that an artist of Diego Rivera's greatness had that meaning to people in Mexico. Now the reason for it is, of course, that Diego Rivera was a muralist, and the murals spoke directly to people. The Mexican people who never would have thought of going into an art gallery were able to see the murals in parks, on buildings, and so on, and they did look at them and felt that he spoke to them.

There was something amusing at Diego's funeral. He had two grown daughters: Ruth was a lawyer, I knew her, and she was a Communist like her father; Lupe, who was older (her full name was Guadalupe), was very Catholic and very right-wing politically. And when it came to what would happen at the cemetery, Ruth had given permission for the Communist party to be very much in the forefront of events. I should mention that about three or four years before his death the Communist party had finally allowed



Diego Rivera to rejoin, and he was very proud of this. And so Ruth, in accord, surely, with his wishes, had said that the Communist party could be present, that it could have a flag there, that it could have one of the speakers. But Lupe was ferociously against this, and so the two grown daughters had a screaming match in front of the spectators and in front of the newspaper people as to who would win out. And there was a compromise finally effected, and the funeral continued. Let me get some water. [tape recorder turned off] Yes. I think I might add that in the fight at the cemetery I seem to recall that there was a question of whether or not a priest would officiate or the leader of the Communist party.

At the end of February of the next year, 1958, David Miller came down to Mexico to ask if I would interrupt Silver Nutmeg and revise another United Artists project that he had, Short Weekend, a melodrama set in Naples which had been written by John Wexley from a novel. Miller was not satisfied with the script. The movie was scheduled for production that summer. There were things that I felt I could contribute to it, and I worked every day and night for six weeks. And Miller went away satisfied, and I was paid \$4,000, less agent's commission. I went back to the Silver Nutmeg research and to inventing the screenplay.

Around this time Trumbo phoned me to ask if I wanted to do the screenplay on Howard Fast's Spartacus. He had





been offered it, but he had too much other work, and I said I was already working on a screenplay and couldn't do it. . . . [sound interference--tape recorder turned off] And I remember Trumbo saying, "Take two, take four." I couldn't do that, although he was someone who did do that and was able to keep various screenplays going at the same time and various producers and directors satisfied. But since Spartacus finally was made and Silver Nutmeg wasn't, I'm afraid I made a bad choice.

In mid-July my wife and daughter and I went up to Los Angeles. This was our first visit since leaving the United States in 1951. Now, it's relevant to mention that we went by plane to Tijuana, there hired a car and drove to Los Angeles. That is to say, we didn't fly directly into the United States.

GARDNER: What about border checks?

MALTZ: There was no border check, as a matter of fact, just went through. They said, "Are you American?" They could tell by our answer that we were. And I mention this because of something that happened later that I will talk about. In Los Angeles I went over the amount of story I had so far developed for Silver Nutmeg with Miller, and we were in agreement about it. He went off to Italy to do Short Weekend, and I settled in for further work on Nutmeg and to see friends. About ten days or two weeks



later Miller returned, having called off the production because the actor that he had signed to use had gained a great deal of weight and was just impossible for the role, and Miller had no substitute at that time.

Very shortly after my arrival in Los Angeles, the passport policy instituted by the State Department in 1950 was upset by a series of cases appealed to the Supreme Court by Paul Robeson, Rockwell Kent, and a psychoanalyst in Los Angeles, Dr. Walter Briehl. I immediately applied for a passport, because my wife and I had wanted to go abroad if we could, and my request was rejected. This was merely an example of the kind of harassment that the passport office and the State Department went in for. I had to hire a firm of attorneys, [Victor] Rabinowitz and [Leonard] Boudin, who had handled these passport cases. They threatened suit--they filed a suit against the State Department, and the afternoon that they filed a suit, the State Department said they would grant me a passport. So it cost me an \$800 fee for the attorneys and for filing and so on, and it's an excellent small example of what a government can do if it wants to be nasty toward its citizens.

In late August there were some events in Mexico that had a personal bearing on me and my family. There was a students' strike because of an increase in bus fares. In Mexico City the buses were not owned by the city itself



but were owned by different, individual companies. And there was a general increase of fares. Although the increase was seemingly quite small, perhaps only twenty or thirty centavos on a one-way ticket, this was important to students, a great many of whom worked. In Mexico City a student might go to classes at the university from seven till ten in the morning, having traveled by two buses, let's say, to get to the university. He then might go downtown by two more buses in order to work during the day, and then he would return to the university for classes in the evening, and then he would go back to his home. So that a twenty or thirty centavo charge on each bus fare might add up to five, seven pesos at the end of a week.

GARDNER: Right.

MALTZ: And for a poor student that was a very significant sum.

The students proceeded to fight the increase in fare in an ingenious manner. A group of ten to twenty of them would get on a bus and tell the bus driver to drive to the university. If he did, nothing else happened; if he didn't want to, they could chuck him off the bus and drive the bus to the university themselves. At that time the university grounds were sacred--they no longer are--but then neither police nor soldiers could enter the university. So after the students had captured perhaps 40 or 100 buses,



the situation became serious. The government, which had not faced any such situation before, decided in its hysteria to claim that the situation was caused by foreign agitators, among them American Reds. And I'm sure that part of this decision came from the American embassy because of what specifically happened.

Three Americans, that I can recall, were deported. One was a businessman, Bernard Blasenheim, whom I didn't know and who apparently had no connection with politics. And I heard that someone who was a competitor of his had seen to it that he was deported. Two of them were men I did know. One was John Bright, the screenwriter, who had been resident there quite some years, and he was just picked up, taken to a holding place, and then taken by plane to Texas and dropped in some town without any money in his pocket. He was, I think, taken from his home. A second man was Allan Lewis, who had been teaching drama--he was essentially a teacher--he had been teaching drama at the National University. Some photograph of him had been taken and superimposed upon a group of students as though he were making a speech to them--which he had never done--and this appeared in the newspapers. He also was summarily deported.

Now, as I learned, police came to my house on successive days. And the occupant of the house at that time was Helen Sobell, Morton Sobell's wife, and their young son. Sometime





before I went to the United States, Morton Sobell's mother had come to Mexico. She had been on a fund-raising trip, and I believe she ended in Mexico just for a rest. I do remember driving her somewhere. I didn't have much contact with her, and I no longer recall how the arrangements were made for Helen Sobell to stay at our house while we were gone, but she was there for about six weeks. The Mexican newspapers proceeded to say the following about me: one, that I was a fugitive from the United States (even though at that time I was in Los Angeles, living in a hotel, telephoning people, seeing friends and so on); secondly, that the Mexican police, finding that I was not at home in Mexico, had put a watch on all border points to be sure that I didn't slip back into Mexico under an assumed name; three, that even though I had resided in Mexico continuously for seven years, I was the secretary of the American Communist party; and four, that Helen Sobell was residing in my home, which was a nest of spies.

Well, the aftermath of this was that, although I had intended to stay in Los Angeles for a shorter period, I remained in the United States until the new president was inaugurated on December first, because I didn't want it to be the old regime. As soon as I got back, I got in touch with Gabriel Figueroa, who was not only a man of importance in Mexico but happened to be the cousin of the new president



who was just elected, who had just come into office, a man whose name was Adolfo Lopez Mateos. And I wrote a letter which my attorney, Benito Noyola, revised in proper Spanish, stating what I was, what I had been doing, referring to my whole history, and saying that I was very willing to leave Mexico at any time that the Mexican government desired me to leave, but that I did not want to be deported because I didn't deserve it. And this letter was presented with the signatures of Figueroa and the director of the film I had worked on, [Roberto] Gavaldon, who in the meantime had become a deputy of the Congress. And I had no trouble after that from anything at all, but I always continued to carry cash and traveler's checks in case there was a switch.

Along this time I met Oscar Lewis and became friendly with him and read some of his material in manuscript. I think I might mention about him something very unusual. Distinguished as he was in the field of anthropology, he was a disappointed opera singer. That was what he had always wanted to be, and even while he was down in Mexico doing his research, he still kept taking singing lessons. He was a very, very compulsive worker, with no ability whatsoever to relax. Even before I knew him particularly well, on impulse I once sat down and sent him a letter and said, "I don't care whether you ever want to talk to me again, but you're such a perfect candidate for a heart



attack that I want to do my best to try and help you change a little bit." He took the letter very warmly, as a matter of fact, but he was too compulsive to change. He also had a tremendous compulsion to see his work on film, and I never really understood that. He used to telephone me about Children of Sanchez or other film possibilities right up until the time he died. And it's perhaps fortunate that he never lived to see what happened to Children of Sanchez when it was made into a film. I had warned him that his work wouldn't come out well, but he was blind to it. He was a very, very nice man, and he had an absolute genius for getting people to talk to him frankly. He won their confidence, and of course he never misused their confidence. But other people could have been as sincere as he and not have the particular qualities that he had that made people talk to him.

At the beginning of December 1958 I started actual writing of the screenplay Silver Nutmeg. It was a project that I had started a year before but there had been interruptions. In February 1959 I was due to make a speech at the [First] Unitarian Church in Los Angeles. This was a church headed by that extraordinary and admirable man Stephen Fritchman, and it had been a center of resistance to McCarthyism throughout the fifties. So that when I was asked to speak there, I decided I would come up to do so.



I arrived in the afternoon of the night I was to make the speech (or afternoon of the day, I guess, on which I was to make the speech), and I was told by the officer who examined my passport that he would like me to wait. He indicated a chair behind him in the office where I was to sit down. I immediately assumed that the FBI in Mexico had notified Los Angeles that I was coming up and that was why I had been stopped. And I had no idea what they were going to do about it, but after I had been kept there for about a half hour, until all of the other passengers had left the baggage area. . . .





TAPE NUMBER: XXIII, SIDE TWO

JANUARY 3, 1979

GARDNER: Continue at the Los Angeles airport.

MALTZ: After the other passengers had passed through customs, I was taken out and told to take everything out of my suitcase. I had a very large valpack and I took everything out. The customs inspector examined everything minutely. I had a little pouch in which I kept a Minox camera, and the pouch was opened and the camera was examined and so on. Then he said I could put the stuff back, and I put the stuff back, and we waited longer. I asked how long I would have to wait. The man said he didn't know. And more time passed, and then I was told to open the suitcase again, and this time not only was everything reexamined but the man started to look through the folders I had of my notes on Silver Nutmeg, because I had brought them up to talk with David Miller while I was there. And then he proceeded to go into folders, and I asked him whether he had the right to do that, and he said yes. And when he went into folders that carried correspondence, I again asked him, and he closed those folders and didn't look at them. It was a situation, of course, in which I was inwardly seething with anger and yet knew that the one thing I had to do was to keep my temper and not comport myself in any way that would enable them to make any charges against me.



My friend George Sklar and his wife had come to pick me up at the airport, and I didn't know that he had called down to Ben Margolis, and that Margolis had called into the immigration service. And [it] was probably as a result of this, and as a result of their getting in touch with the FBI downtown and learning that there was no reason to hold me, that they finally let me go after about an hour and a half of detention. There is more to this that I'll tell about later.

I made my speech at the church and stayed for a few days to talk over the Nutmeg material with David Miller. And then I was got in touch with by Ingo Preminger, Otto Preminger's brother. To my best recollection I had not known Ingo, and I don't recall now how he reached me--perhaps through Trumbo. But I saw him, and he told me that his brother was going to produce and direct Exodus, which was then a current best-seller, and would I be interested in the job. Of course, I said I would be. I had not read the book and I sat down to read it. I found it to be a mixture of high passion, which I liked, and of cheap writing in many sequences, which I didn't like. But I then had a meeting with Otto Preminger, and we talked about the story and agreed that I would work on it. I told him that I intended to go to Europe in April for a three-month visit and that I would include Israel now in my trip. He said that as long



as he had the screenplay by the end of December it would be okay.

I returned to Los Angeles and continued very intensive work on Silver Nutmeg. I was not quite finished with the last sequences when the time came in late March for me to start for Europe. Miller was in New York, and I wanted him to have the screenplay and, at the same time, I didn't want to run the risk of being stopped at the airport again and perhaps slapped with some phony charge that might prevent me from taking off to Europe. I had, in the meantime, learned from a friend that it was possible to go by train to Nuevo Laredo, and then to take a taxi across to Laredo where I would pass through customs and where he had done this without being stopped in any way. Then I would have to take a train to St. Louis and, from St. Louis, another to New York. It would be a long trip of, I think, three days and three nights, but it would accomplish what I wanted.

During the time on the train, I would be able to finish the last sequence so that I could give the screenplay to Miller. And this was exactly what I did. And I slipped into New York and had the last sequence typed and gave it to Miller and took a train to Montreal. And from Montreal, we went off on our trip.

It happened that I had block royalties in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Russia, and we had planned a



trip that would be largely paid for by those royalties. Just one second. . . . [tape recorder turned off] In Israel our quick one-week look made me know that I needed more time for research, and I decided that I would return to Israel at the end of my trip. We had one experience that resulted in a book by my wife.

We went to a kibbutz right close to the Gaza Strip; it was called Yad Mordechai. We had an English-speaking Israeli with us who worked in the Ministry of Information and who guided people around. A man we met, who was the gardener of the kibbutz, was also its librarian, and he proceeded to tell us the extremely dramatic story of the way in which the kibbutz had resisted the attack of three Egyptian brigades in the war of 1948, the war of independence. The Egyptians had had tanks, heavy artillery and planes, several planes, and the kibbutz had had, I think, 120 fighting men with rifles and a few machine guns; and yet they had held up the Egyptians for three days and nights in their area, allowing forces to assemble for the defense of Tel Aviv. It was a very extraordinary story, but I didn't understand the reason why he told it to us in such detail. We discovered after we left that they had two books of mine in Hebrew in their library and that they had been looking for someone to write their story ever since 1948, that several Israeli writers had come down but it had not been worked out, and that he had told the





story at that length in the hope of getting me interested in doing it. I was not interested in doing a nonfiction book, but it turned out that my wife got very intrigued by it and, during the course of the winter, thought about it a great deal and decided that she would do it if they would cooperate with her, because she wanted to interview every one of the survivors of that battle. She set up communication with one of the English-speaking members of the group, and, as we found out later, they had considerable discussion as to whether they wanted a non-Jew to write their story; but they finally decided that she would be acceptable. And so the following year she went back to do her research on it.

Our next country we visited was East Germany where we had as our guide and companion Eberhard Brüning. He is today Professor Doctor Brüning. At that time he was an instructor at the University of Leipzig, which was renamed Karl Marx University. He had originally gotten in touch with me in the early fifties, when he was a graduate student, to ask data about my work and to ask me to send him some of my things. I did this, and we carried on a correspondence, because he eventually wrote his doctoral thesis on my work. And later he wrote a book about my work.

In East Berlin I had a lot of royalties stored up. We were put into a once-celebrated hotel, the Adlon. I



knew the name of the Adlon from various novels I had read. It was the posh hotel of Berlin in the Weimar Republic and then later even in the Hitler period. But now it was cut in half; it had been cut in half by artillery fire. I remember once walking down the hall from my room just to sort of explore the place, and I saw a door and opened it--and I opened it on empty air: there was about a forty-foot drop to the ground from where I was. The hotel looked out on the remains of Hitler's bunker where his headquarters had been in the whole last phase of the war and where he died. This had been hit by heavy artillery and perhaps dynamited as well, I imagine, so that there was an immense expanse of some acres in which there were mountains of rubble and huge stones--not stone, but pieces of concrete upturned and on end. It was an incredible scene of desolation--and yet, of course, fiercely dramatic because of what we knew had taken place there.

At that time the government of East Germany had made a decision that I regarded even then as very foolish. They had decided not to build anything close to the border with West Berlin because they thought there was going to be the possibility of war and they didn't want to construct anything that would then be knocked down. So as a result, while they had swept the streets, the rubble was still everywhere for blocks. It was possible--since at that time



there was no wall and people could walk freely from East to West, or could take an elevated train from East to West--it was possible for people to walk from the reconstructed west part of Berlin, which was all shiny and lovely with new buildings constructed with American money, and walk into what seemed an area of absolute desolation which was East Berlin. The fact that further to the east in the city they had built a great many new apartment houses, and so on, made no difference in terms of the impression that it would give visitors.

I did find myself very moved by the fact that the editor of my publishing house, Schalike, and a theater director, Wolfgang Langhoff, who was the director of the current play Anne Frank, and who previously had directed the play Merry Go Round by George Sklar and myself--that these two men and others like them had been themselves in concentration camps. It seemed a token of the new regime in East Germany that there were dedicated antifascists in that position. I know that the head of the publishing house, a man called Schalike, had written a very warm and tender note to my wife just before I went to prison. And I was so struck to find him obviously a sick man after his years in a concentration camp, and indeed it was only about a year later that he died.

I met Stefym Heym, who had been a refugee in the United States and had published novels here, and then had been a



volunteer in the American army and after the war remained in East Germany. He was now in a fight with the East German government because they wouldn't publish a novel he had written about the 1954 antigovernment demonstration by German workers, by workers in Berlin. He previously had had a book published there which had been a great success, and they valued him as a citizen, but they wouldn't publish this book, and he wouldn't take it quietly. But in spite of that, there was apparently much more tolerance in East Germany than in the other socialist countries. Heym lived in a lovely private home full of antiques, and he had a motorboat on which he took us out on a beautiful, large lake which is part of the Berlin area. I must say I was impressed to see how many sailboats there were on the lake and how many boats, large boats, belonging to different trade unions were there, and it was certainly not a picture of a starving nation deprived of all pleasures.

At Stefym Heym's home I met several people whom I hadn't seen since I left the States. One was Earl Robinson, my very good friend, who at that time was teaching music in a private school in Brooklyn. He was blacklisted, and he was now in Berlin because he had been invited to conduct several of his works with German orchestras. And I met Joris Ivens, the documentary film worker, filmmaker, very great at his role, who had been in the United States during





the war years but had left when the war was over, and I hadn't seen him now for, oh, about thirteen years.

I also met someone at his home with whom I was to become very considerably involved. This was a French singer by the name of Fania Fenelon. I learned that she had been in a women's orchestra in Auschwitz. I had not known that there was such a thing, and it intrigued me very much. She was going back to Paris very shortly after, and we intended to be in Paris so we arranged to meet when we came there. I wanted to learn more about it.

I had a reunion there with our friends from Mexico, John Pen's widow, Erzi, now there under his name as Mrs. [János] Székely, which had been his real name. Pen had died shortly before I came there. They had left Mexico around, oh, 1956, not willingly but because, as alien-born citizens of the United States, they could not remain out of the United States more than five years without returning or they would lose their citizenship. And so they had gone back to the States, but he had not been able to make a financial go of it. He couldn't get work in film, and so they had gone over to West Berlin to see if he could do some writing there, and he did a little but found that he could do more writing in East Berlin, so they had moved over to East Berlin. And then he had died. But at that time his daughter Kathy was acting the chief



role in Anne Frank, which was done in the Deutches Theatre, the main theater in East Berlin, outside of Brecht's theater. And so we and Kathy and Erzi had a sad-glad reunion.

I might say that there's enough that's wrong with a country like East Germany not to have to go in for lying about it. At that time, for instance, I read reports by American reporters about the lack of food in East Germany. But my personal experience was one of going into an ice cream parlor, or whatever they would call it over there, where my wife and daughter had ice cream with whipped cream in such quantities as obviously meant an abundance of milk and cream. And I also found out that doctors in East Germany were trying to get workers to cut down on the amount of butter they were using because of the incidence of heart attacks. So that it's just unfortunate to have stupid lies instead of the criticism that would have been valid.

With a car and a chauffeur furnished by our publisher, we drove down to Leipzig. I must say that some of the untouched medieval towns of Germany are simply beautiful, as well as a great deal of the countryside. And there, in some of the small towns, we saw well-dressed people walking the streets on a Sunday with their children in new prams, and there was again no sense of a suffering, starving people. In Leipzig I spoke to the students at Brüning's university, and I remember being taken to the



church where Bach had played for many years. And then we went on to Dresden purely in order for us to see Ernesto Amann. He was the Austrian doctor who had been my physician in Cuernavaca. By about 19 . . . oh, '55 or '56, he was very eager to leave Cuernavaca because he felt that the practice of medicine, as he was doing it, was not what he really wanted to do. He wanted to practice social medicine instead of private, and, in addition, he had a marriage that he didn't want to continue. He tried at first to go to China, where he would have liked to practice, but found that he couldn't arrange that, and he did arrange to get to East Germany. So that by the time we came, he had been there about two years. We found that he had made an alliance with a German doctor, a woman who had also been in Spain, and that they wanted to be married. They had been living together, and, knowing that we were coming over, he had delayed his marriage until the day we arrived in Dresden so that we could be best man and woman there. And so we were. And then we went and had dinner at a very nice writers club across the river in Dresden and then walked around Dresden, went to a museum. Dresden was a terrible place to look at because immense areas of it were nothing but rubble carefully swept up, but no new building had gone up, and the results of the terrible bombing there were evident everywhere.



That night, in their apartment, Ernesto began to talk to me about medical practices in the hospital where he worked which outraged him. He spoke of a patient who died because the doctor who was his (Ernesto's) superior insisted upon a certain type of treatment, and he, Ernesto, knew that it was wrong and even brought the doctor literature to show him. And the doctor said, "In this hospital, this is the way we do it." And he couldn't get past that Prussian stubbornness, as he called it, and he even felt that some of the doctors were ex-Nazis. He was immensely agitated over it, and, as he began to talk, he began to become incoherent. I didn't know then, as I learned later, that he had been in a psychiatric institution for some weeks, due to a breakdown, until just before we came. The knowledge that we were coming had enabled him to pull himself together and come out and act in a perfectly sane manner for most of the day in which we were there. But now, as he talked about these things that were agitating him so much, he began to go to pieces. And he pleaded with me to write to Khrushchev. He said that if I wrote to Khrushchev, Khrushchev would listen to me and would learn about these practices. We passed a very distressing several hours until, finally, we went to sleep.

And I remember the next morning, when we left and said goodbye, his wife couldn't speak. She just stood





in the doorway, weeping. I didn't understand then, since I didn't know he had been in an institution, the depth of what she was afraid of; but I did learn about a month after we came home when I received a letter from her that he had committed suicide.

On our way back to Berlin we stopped at the concentration camp--we stopped first at Weimar, which was the home of Goethe, and then went above it some miles to a height on which there was the concentration camp of Buchenwald. Unlike many other concentration camps where the buildings are largely intact, the buildings at Buchenwald had been torn down: there was nothing but a very large, flat area. However, at the rear of that area, small buildings did remain where people had been executed. This was not a death camp with gas chambers where people were taken by the tens of thousands for killing. But it was a place where a good many men were shot in the back of the head and then cremated in ovens. Several ovens were there in a kind of a "museum" attached to it. I was very impressed to see the photographs of individual Germans, or small groups of Germans, who had been arrested and executed for anti-Nazi activity during the war. They were young people, and it was obvious that they had not been organized Communists or Socialists before the war, but they had just moved into antifascist activity because of their loathing



for what was going on. I was very impressed also by the large contingents of schoolchildren who were present when we were there, and I learned that every schoolchild of a certain age in East Germany was brought to one concentration camp or another to teach them what fascism had meant.

We went on then to Prague, where we were met by my old friend Hans Burger and his wife, Puck. I forget whether I mentioned earlier who Hans Burger was. He was a Czech, a young Czech film man, who came to the United States as a refugee around 1938 with a film that he had worked on called The Lights Are Going Out in Europe. We became friendly and were in touch until the time that I went to Hollywood. I am sure that in some way we got in touch before--I know that there was some way in which we got in touch again before we came to Prague because he met us at the plane with his wife, who was a German girl. I'll tell about her for a moment.

Hans was a combat photographer with the U.S. Army, and at a certain point he was in Munich, I believe, doing a film about what had been known by Germans about the concentration camps. He was filming in an office with a large group of industrialists and one secretary, who was this young, pretty girl, Puck. He asked questions, and all of the industrialists were denying that they knew anything about the concentration camps. At a certain point



the girl jumped up and said, "You, Herr so-and-so, who lived in Weimar, didn't know that right above there was the concentration camp of Buchenwald? You are a liar!" And she went down the line of the other people, calling them all liars. And Hans said, "And I married her." She was a lovely, lovely girl.

As we drove from the airport, Hans told a story of what had happened to him during the war. He said that when his outfit came very close to Prague, he found it absolutely insupportable not to know whether the old city of Prague, which was so beautiful, had been damaged. And so at a certain time, without permission from his superiors, he commandeered a jeep and drove himself into Prague. He drove in a certain way so that when he turned around a wall he would see the old city. And as he finished his story, he drove his car around that same wall and we saw with him the beautiful Charles Bridge over the river there. It's a spectacularly lovely sight, and Hans said that when he saw that, saw that it had not been touched by artillery fire or bombing, he just burst into tears. And the old city of Prague is just magnificent.

At that time my play Black Pit was being performed in one of the theaters of Prague, the Realistic Theatre, and it was very pleasant to go there and to see it done. And although, of course, I couldn't follow the language, I knew the story and I could see that the quality of the ensemble



acting was very good indeed. I might mention that one of the best actors was a man named Walter Taub, who was also a distinguished film actor, and he now is one of those who is without work in Czechoslovakia because he was a part of the Prague Spring [1968] that sought to reform the country. [tape recorder turned off]

A man with whom I had a reunion was Francis, or Frantisek, Vrba. He was a literary critic, literary and cinema critic, who had translated Black Pit. He previously had come through Los Angeles around the year 1949 when he was cultural attaché to the Czech embassy in Washington. He was a man who had been in, I think it was, nine different Nazi work camps. He was arrested for anti-Nazi activity as a youth of about seventeen and put into these work camps--not sent to Auschwitz because he was not a Jew. And when he came out, he weighed ninety pounds--but survived it. And when he came through Los Angeles, he looked me up, and I found him to be a most personable and charming man, and I was glad to make his acquaintance again in Prague. I will mention about him that he too was a member of the Prague Spring. In his case he was sent to prison in 1968 by the Czech government that came after [Alexander] Dubcek was kicked out. I know that after about a year or so he was allowed out of prison, and I had the very briefest exchange of





cards with him. I think he may be working as a day laborer.

We also visited the concentration camp of Terezin (it has a longer name in Czech), and it figured considerably in the TV film of Holocaust. It was an unusual concentration camp in that it had an outward show of being a normal community and was used to fool the Red Cross when they sent inspection delegations; but behind the facade, there was misery and death.

We next came into Warsaw, which was a miracle of rebuilding because, after the uprising in Warsaw by the Polish nationalists in 1944, Hitler had ordered that the city be razed--and it was. Everything in it was destroyed, so much so that after the war the question was raised as to whether or not it should be left as it was and a new city built further up the river, the river Vistula. But it was finally decided that what was underground, that is, the pipes, the sewers, and so on, were so important in the building of a city that it was better to clear the rubble out and rebuild. And the rebuilding, by the time we came, was extraordinary, because, unlike a city like Dresden, one saw no rubble; there were only well-built buildings. And miraculously, there was a section called Old Town built around a square, and the old designs for it had been found, and so all of the buildings were restored on the



outside exactly as they had been since medieval times, excepting that now they had proper plumbing and electricity and so on. It was very beautiful.

Of course we saw our friends the Liebers, and at that time they had only been there about three years--no they'd been there four years. And Lieber was functioning well in several publishing houses, and his wife was studying at the university to get a Ph.D. so that she could teach, and they had a nice apartment. They were able to use funds that they had to buy things from England and the U.S. so that they had clothes and various foods that they could enjoy, and they had a car. At that time they thought it was very nice there.

I had an evening with my publisher there, and he told me something that I have never forgotten because it was so revelatory. He had been a colonel in a Polish division attached to the Russian army and . . .

GARDNER: What was his name?

MALTZ: I'm not sure, let me. . . .

GARDNER: No, we can put that in later.

MALTZ: All right. I'll have to try and look it up. (His name was Burgin.) I think he may be in the United States, I'm not sure. Oh I don't know . . . no, no, no, no, he's there on a . . . I don't know. I know that he is no longer a publisher, because he was Jewish, and he. . . .



Anyway, I told him my bewilderment about the manner in which various of the old Russian Bolsheviks had confessed to all sorts of crimes they had not committed--my confusion about their behavior. Because I said that if I had been in their position, I would have known that my life was over, and I would have said, "No, I'm not guilty of any of these things. Shoot me if you want, but I'm not going to tarnish myself before the world, I've been an honest man." And he said, "Well, let me tell you a story--" Oh, he said, "let me explain about that." He said, "In the first place, there were many who said that, and they were just shot out of hand. They never came to trial." He said, "For instance, I know that shortly before Stalin's death, an assistant secretary of the foreign ministry was suddenly arrested. And he was brought before a military tribunal who demanded that he confess to a crime, and he refused and he said, 'I am a Communist, and you men up there are fascists, and someday the party will catch up with you.' And he was shot. And he said there were others who were promised that if they would confess, the party would see to it that they would remain under house arrest for a few years and then they would be rehabilitated. And they believed it, and they did as they were asked and then they were shot." And he said, "And there was another method. And let me tell you a story about it."



He said, "A leading member of the central committee of the Communist party was arrested and brought to a cell in which there were a good number of people. And there are calls to him, they say, 'Hello, so-and-so, so you're here now, huh?' And he replied to them, 'Don't talk to me. You're counterrevolutionaries, you're Trotskyites, and I am a Communist, and I don't want to have anything to do with you!' And they responded, 'Well, if that's how you feel, okay.' A little while later he was taken down to a cellar room in which there was a very young, strong man in uniform who had obviously not gone through anything of the history of the Communist movement that he had. And the man, the interrogator, said to him, 'What's your name?' And he said, 'My name is so-and-so.' And the interrogator said, 'Look, I want the truth now. I want to know what your name is.' He replied, 'Well, comrade, everybody knows me. I'm a member of the central committee, I've been a member of the party for so many and so many years, my name is such and such.' And the interrogator looked at him for a moment, and then said, 'This is the last chance you're going to have. I want to know what your name is.' And the central committee man said, 'Well, what can I tell you except what I've told you before? My name is so-and-so.' Whereupon the interrogator got up, standing a foot above the central committee member, and hit him and





knocked him down. The man was terribly shaken, and the interrogator goes back to his chair and sits down and says, 'Get up!' The man gets up slowly, and the interrogator says, 'What's your name?' And the man doesn't know what to answer. And he says, 'Come on, what's your name?' The man says, 'I can't tell you anything except what I've told you. My name is such and such.' The interrogator gets up, and hits him again and knocks him down. And he looks down at him, and he says, 'I'll tell you what your name is. Your name is shit.' And he goes back to his seat and he says, 'Get up. Come forward. Now, what is your name?' And, trembling, the man looks at him. And the interrogator says, 'What is your name?' And the man answers, 'My name is shit.' He's taken back to the cell, and he cries out, 'Comrades, what's going on here? What's happening?' And they say, 'Oh, now you call us comrades!'" [laughter]

And this was a symbolic example of one of the ways in which men were finally led to confess to anything that the police wanted them to say. Of course other methods were used and are best presented by the novel Confess--not the novel, the autobiography Confession by Artur London, the Czech who was one of the men in the 1952 trials in Czechoslovakia who was imprisoned and sentenced to death; but later it was commuted, and he was let out. And that was the explanation of what happened in these trials.



Isn't it incredible and shocking?

GARDNER: It really is.

MALTZ: Isn't that a story?

GARDNER: My tape's just about out, so I think we should. . . .

MALTZ: All right.



TAPE NUMBER: XXIV, SIDE ONE

JANUARY 9, 1979

MALTZ: From Warsaw we went on to Moscow, and I'd like just a few quick comments before I tell the one important thing that's relevant to this oral history. I found that I had had in my mind an image of Moscow that came out of Dostoyevsky and other Russian materials, and I was not prepared to see a city with the broadest avenues I've ever been to. It's relevant to mention, because of something that I'll discuss later, that I was given royalties by my publishing house there of 17,000 rubles. [tape recorder turned off] I was given royalties of 17,000 rubles for one edition of 100,000 copies of The Cross and the Arrow. I mention it because it became a key for my figuring out a rate of royalties later when I needed to do that.

One of the people I met there was a man by the name of Lev Kopelev. His wife who--he is a literary man, a translator who specializes in German literature--and his wife is a critic and a translator of English materials. Her name was Raya Orlova. They talked to me very freely about themselves, and Lev told the following story.

In World War II he had been the political commissar of a Latvian division. And when their division entered Germany, the soldiers began to pillage and rape. Kopelev went indignantly to his military commander and said that,



no matter what the Germans had done to the Russians, it was simply not behavior that any Russian army should indulge in, that this was absolutely forbidden. He was arrested, and he was charged with slandering the army and with "bourgeois humanism." He was put on trial before a military judge. (At the time he was put on trial, various members of his Communist party group in the division sent a telegram to Stalin because they believed that if Stalin knew what was happening, he would interfere. I mention this in passing as a wonderful example of the delusion of the Russian people about Stalin). And the judge declared him innocent of the charges. That judge was then dismissed and Kopelev was rearrested, and another judge was appointed, and he held Kopelev guilty and gave him three years. And that judge was dismissed, and another judge was appointed, and there was a third trial, and he was given ten years and he served them. Now, his comment to me was that the way he had felt about it all through the ten years in a prison labor camp was that if he was on a train and the train was going in the right direction and the conductor threw him off the train, it still didn't mean that the train wasn't going in the right direction. Later he changed. Let's shut off for a moment. [tape recorder turned off]

Now, at the time that I met him, I didn't know his surname. I assumed that it was the same name as his wife's,





which was Orlova. If I knew then what I now know about the endings of Russian surnames, I would have known that that was impossible because Orlova was a feminine ending in Russian. Now, over the years, as I started to follow what was happening to Solzhenitsyn, I read of a Lev Kopelev who had been in--oh, did I make clear earlier that I knew him only as Lev?

GARDNER: No, I don't recall. . . .

MALTZ: Oh, well then, I've missed my point here. I called him Lev Kopelev, but when I met him . . . I first met his wife, who was Raya Orlova, and she introduced me to her husband Lev.

GARDNER: I see.

MALTZ: And I never knew a different surname, so that the name Kopelev, which I give him now, is not one that I knew him by. And over the years I read of a Lev Kopelev who had been in prison with Solzhenitsyn and was the model for the character of Rubin in Solzhenitsyn's book The First Circle. I also read that it was Kopelev who had taken the manuscript of One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich to the editor of the magazine that first published it. And at another point I read that Lev Kopelev had had certain manuscripts of Solzhenitsyn in his possession to hide them and protect them. But it was not until 1976 that I discovered that the Lev I had met and corresponded with over the years was Lev Kopelev--that they were the same man.



I learned this because I had a letter forwarded to me by a reporter from a leading newspaper, who was returning from Moscow, and he had a letter for me from Raya. I wrote to her in reply but I've never had an answer.

I looked Kopelev up and discovered that in 1962, which was only three years after I met him, he was attacked for defending the right of Soviet artists to develop abstract techniques. And in 1966 he wrote in behalf of two writers, [Andrei] Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel, who were imprisoned for an offense I will discuss in a moment. And he signed a petition urging their release. As a result, he was expelled from the party and dismissed from the Institute of Historical Sciences. Also, some of his books previously approved for publication were removed from the publication list. About the same time in 1976 that I got the letter from Raya, I read some newspaper reports on him which indicated that he was in a dangerous political position in the Soviet Union, and also that he had coronary trouble and had been in and out of hospitals. For whatever help it might be, I wrote an article about him which was published in the L.A. Times on April 22, 1977. I want to read the last sentence of it. In the article I discuss the fact that Kopelev had published a book which was now in English, and I will say in passing that something very unfortunate happened to it in its U.S. publication. It was a book of



over 700 pages, and it was cut down in half so that it is very fragmentary indeed and not satisfactory as a book.

I said: "Kopelev has written his autobiography and smuggled it out to the West in manuscript. Had he been able to find a publisher in his own country, he would not have needed to seek foreign publication in this clandestine way. He borrowed the title for his book from the stamp placed by the Soviet secret police on the dossiers of all political prisoners, 'To Be Preserved Forever.'" Isn't that an extraordinary title and concept? I had never heard that before and never seen it written about. In all the data on the Soviet Union no one ever came up with that.

GARDNER: Right.

MALTZ: So far as I know from any reading, he is still at liberty. I might say that not only I but others who have met them, like Lillian Hellman, regard them as just simply marvelous people.

In Moscow, I met Angus Cameron, my friend and former editor at Little, Brown, for the first time in about ten years, and discovered, to my great pleasure, that he had just been hired as an editor at Knopf--which was a sign of changing times. And I also met Corliss Lamont, whom I had never known before. I used the opportunity to talk with both of them about the question of the failure of the Soviet Union to ask permission of any foreign writers when



it published their works. At this time, as a legitimate complaint against the Soviet Union but also, in part, as a political weapon for some people, there was a demand that the Soviet Union pay royalties to authors. Now, there's a long history to this that I won't go into except to say that the new Soviet state in 1917, and in the twenties and thirties, simply didn't have the money to pay royalties. It wasn't even recognized by a country like the United States, and yet it wanted to publish books for its people. And so I regard with sympathy its failure to pay royalties at that time. But the times had changed by 1959, and I took the position that even if it still could not afford to pay hard currency royalties, one thing that it could do with authors was to write to them and ask permission to publish their books, and explain that they could not at this time pay royalties, but that if any writer came to the Soviet Union, they would be glad to give them royalties in rubles, which was already their practice. I also believed that it would be pleasing to writers, and their due, if the Soviet editors also kept them informed of the number of copies printed, and perhaps of any book reviews, and of reactions of readers. I urged Cameron and Lamont, who both were seeing various people around in the establishment, to try and push this idea. So that we had a little . . . what's called a fraction working in the Soviet Union on this point.





Well, the result of my discussion of this with the head of my publishing house and with various critics was that a meeting was arranged between me and the assistant minister of culture. Just at that time there was some top-level political thing going on in Moscow, and it was explained to me that the assistant minister was taking his lunch hour to talk to me. I was taken by my translator to an old czarist palace, which was now the headquarters, apparently, for the Ministry of Culture, and there I met the head of my publishing house and his assistant, and I noticed with some dismay their nervousness at the fact they were going to see the assistant minister of culture. Several times each of them whipped out a comb to comb his hair, and they straightened their ties, and they shifted their jackets, and it didn't feel good to me.

We finally went up a long stairway and into a very large room which must have been a ballroom at one time, and there, sitting at a desk, was the assistant minister with a translator and someone else, I forget all of it. I was introduced to him and waited for the moment to talk. When it came, I began to explain my position to him, and I don't think I had spoken for as much as fifteen seconds when he interrupted me with the assertion that American authors ought to be happy that the Russians publish their work for Russian workers, and with that he launched into



an uninterrupted talk for perhaps ten minutes. And when he was through, I was through and I was ushered out. He had not heard what I came to ask him to consider at all, and I could not have received a better example of Soviet-- I could not have experienced a better example of bureaucracy.

GARDNER: You never tried to break in or . . .

MALTZ: No.

GARDNER: . . . say a few words on your behalf?

MALTZ: I don't remember anymore. I might have. But there was such a kind of imperial flood of talk, this man lecturing me, and just by nature I'm not, let's say, a rough-and-tumble fighter in conversation where I would just . . . I . . . you know. I was waiting politely for him to finish and give me an opportunity; but when he finished, the interview was over. That was it.

I never got to Leningrad because of illness on the part of both my wife and daughter, and I went next to London. The only thing I will mention there is that Paul Robeson was playing Macbeth at Stratford-on-Avon. I went up to see the play and to see him, and I saw him before the performance. He had changed since the last time I had seen him by gaining a good deal of weight. He now had considerable weight around his middle, and his face had gotten quite round. But he was full of buoyancy about the future. He told me about an Australian tour that had been



offered him, and that now he could go back and sing in the United States any time he wanted to. It was quite a surprise to me to learn, I guess about two years later (I'm not absolutely sure, it may only have been one year later), that he was ill and in a sanitorium. I discovered from friends that what had happened was that Robeson had gone into a very serious depression--from which he never recovered. This was hidden by members of his family and by friends from the public, but this is what happened to Robeson. And from '61 until his death in, I guess, '77, he never appeared in public other than in one brief period when he made a kind of recovery and made a bit of a tour, a bit of a speaking tour with his wife Eslanda. I was in the audience when he appeared at the Unitarian church in Los Angeles. He spoke very differently than in previous years, and I was very sorrowful. I know that my friend Earl Robinson told me of meeting with some others at his home in Philadelphia in the late sixties and trying to cheer him up by having a songfest, but he just sat in a depressed state and couldn't respond. I'll just say, in parting, that I think he is one of the few geniuses that I've met in the course of my life.

After London I went back to Paris for a few days and, there, had some intensive talks with Fania Fenelon. She had been in the French Resistance and, after her arrest, was sentenced to death but in order to save herself said



that she was Jewish; and thereupon they said, "Well, we'll handle you some other way," and they sent her to Auschwitz. And there. . . .

GARDNER: That's sort of an odd line in order to save herself.

MALTZ: Yes, well. . . .

GARDNER: Did she honestly. . . ? She was just really postponing, she thought, I suppose. . . .

MALTZ: No, no, she was advised to say that by someone in the group with whom she was with: say you're Jewish, and they won't shoot you. Now, I don't know--I know that that was not a regular rule, because I've met other members of the Resistance who said that Jews found with weapons on them were shot just like anyone else. But in her case, she did say that after having been sentenced to be shot, she was sent to Auschwitz. Now in fact, this blue-eyed girl was half-Jewish, I think--I know. I don't think . . . I think one of her parents was not Jewish. And in Auschwitz, after a little while she became a member of the women's orchestra. I might explain that the Nazis used an orchestra both in the men's and women's camp for two purposes: one was to play marching songs when those prisoners who went to work outside the camp marched out and also when they marched back at night; the other was to play music of a sort of a light classical variety for the SS guards when they wanted





recreation. For instance, after a train came in with new prisoners and they were separated--a portion to go into the camp and a portion to go immediately into the gas chambers--some of the guards might come in and say they were tired and they wanted to hear some music. And the orchestra would play for them. For a certain period, the conductor of the orchestra was herself a professional musician, Anna Mahler, the niece of Gustav Mahler, the composer. She died in Auschwitz. I told Fania that I hope to work on this material. I had the screenplay of Exodus to write first, and I hoped to return to work with her.

Oh, another thing that happened then was that I had a reunion with Jules Dassin, with whom I had been in correspondence for a number of years, and he was then new in his relationship with Melina Mercouri, who was later to become his wife. He was then separated from his first wife. At that point, Margaret went home, Margaret and my daughter went home, and I went back to Israel to do some intensive work for Exodus.

In Israel, where I had the assistance of some top-level people as a result of Otto Preminger's connections, I found that many of the main sequences in the book of Exodus, in the book written by [Leon] Uris, were phony. For instance, he has a very important section where quite a number of Jews on the island of Cyprus are taken off



by the Jewish underground to a boat in a certain harbor. Well, that particular harbor that he spoke of could not take anything but very small boats. And so I learned from Israelis what actually happened in the very incidents that Uris used.

After about ten days of this, I had a very long meeting with Preminger, who had come to Israel, in which I told him of my findings, and I told him of my proposal to change sequences in the story so that they would be accurate. And he was in complete accord with my doing this. Either at this time or later, in Mexico, he told me that he wanted to put my name on the screen, and there was some question about whether or not the United Artists executives would agree to this; and if not, he felt that there could be a compromise in not announcing it beforehand but just having my name appear on the screen. Of course I was very pleased about this, because I thought it would mean the ending of the blacklist or the beginning of the end of it, for everyone.

I returned to Mexico via an Air France flight, and this flight had a normal refueling stopover in New York for two hours. It was the custom for all passengers who had people they wanted to see in New York to first pass through customs inspection, and then they could freely visit before the flight took off again. But I ran into



this book in the customs office, and I was detained for an hour and a half before they let me out. I had my brothers outside waiting, and it was something I was very angry about. This is perhaps a point to mention the kind of thing that can happen and that doesn't get into the newspapers. One of my friends in Mexico, a painter and teacher by the name of Francisco Mora, had gone to Guinea in Africa with another friend for a teachers conference. And I think he had gone by Air Canada and so had avoided the United States; but for some reason or another, on his return flight there had to be a stop at LaGuardia. He was taken off the plane, he and his friend, and put into a large automobile. It was nighttime, and I think it was for about three hours, with another automobile following them, they were driven around the LaGuardia area at very rapid speeds, with the brakes suddenly being put on so that they were thrown forward and sideways, and this went on and on for almost all of the three hours--every attempt being made to get them to lose their heads and perhaps try to jump out of the car, at which point they could be arrested for trying to escape from customs, or do something violent to the driver. At the last they were left for about one half-hour just sitting in a gas station in the LaGuardia area without the drivers there, in the hope that maybe they would make a break for it. And both men were very disciplined and



supported each other and did nothing, and finally they were put back on the plane and allowed to go to Mexico.

Shortly after my return, I opened a correspondence about this thing that occurred at airports with me with Ben Margolis and questioned him about whether or not there might be some legal action on this. I also wrote to I. F. Stone, who had visited me in Mexico--or had visited Mexico and had come to see me shortly after my return from Paris--and I had forgotten to talk to him about it while he was there. I wrote him asking if it was something that he wanted to discuss in his bulletin. Ben Margolis felt that there would be some real point in a legal suit, and I asked him to go into the costs of it, which he did. I then decided to postpone it until after Exodus was finished because I didn't want anything legal happening that would be in the paper and might interfere with my getting my name on the film. And subsequent to that, I finally decided not to do it because the costs were too high, I felt, for me to undertake.

I worked very intensively on the planning and research for Exodus, and then began to write the screenplay. Preminger visited me in mid-September to hear the plot, and I told him the plot from beginning to end, and he was delighted with it and tremendously moved. At several points he asked me to pause because he had to wipe tears from his





eyes, and I mention this for a reason that will become clear in a moment.

GARDNER: You'd made substantial changes from the novel though.

MALTZ: Yes. What I did, for instance--the changes were not in the story line--but instead of having a phony escape to a ship in a harbor which couldn't take such a ship, I did what they actually did in Cyprus: they prepared tunnels for a breakout; so I would do that kind of thing. Or there was a breakout in the story from a prison at Acre, and I talked with some men who engineered the breakout in the prison and found that it had been done differently--as a matter of fact, with much more excitement than in the novel, but there was still the breakout. So I did the breakout actually through a Turkish bathhouse, which they used, which was adjacent to the prison. I did it that way. So I didn't change the general line of the novel in any way; I just made the incidents authentic where they had not been.

And so I was working along with great intensiveness and great excitement, and around Christmas, when I was finishing the last sequence, I got a phone call from Otto, with no prior preparation, saying, "I'm sorry, but I don't know what kind of a screenplay you're writing. It's a sort of a travelog about Israel, but it isn't what I want.



And I may be making a mistake, but I've decided not to use your screenplay and to hire another writer. I'm hiring Dalton Trumbo." This was, of course, an absolute thunderbolt. There was no relationship between what he called a travelog and the plot which had moved him to tears, and it was the same plot. And my subsequent surmise about what may have happened was this. The novel was an immense international best-seller, and it may be that, as Otto got the sequences of my screenplay which I was mailing up to him, he decided that the audience would come into the theater expecting certain actions, like people escaping in a ship, and they wouldn't get that in the film, and that they would be disappointed. He may have been right about that; but the point is, why didn't he know that in advance? Well, perhaps one can't blame him. He didn't know in advance, and he finally recognized it, and he didn't take it up with me by saying, "Look, this is the problem. How about rewriting it even though you know it's phony in the way it was in the book?" If he had done that, I might have decided to do it or I might not have. But it was never something that we came to grips with.

So in retrospect, this was a very unfortunate happening for me personally. If, for instance, I had sat down after he hired me and written a script based upon the book without ever having gone to Israel, Exodus would have come out in



the way it did, and I would have been on the screen, and it would have changed my whole career. But this is what happened.

GARDNER: When Trumbo did the screenplay, he really did it. . . ?

MALTZ: He did it from the book. Yes, he did it from the book--which I could have done, too.

GARDNER: Right. [laughter]

MALTZ: In 1960 Margaret and I were planning a return to Europe in May. First we were going to Israel because--oh, I don't know if I mentioned that she wanted to. . . . Over the months from our leaving Israel, she had decided that she would like to write the story . . .

GARDNER: You mentioned that last time.

MALTZ: . . . of kibbutz, yes, Yad Mordechai. And so she set up correspondence and there was agreement. So we were going to Israel to get her set up there, and then I was going to go on to Paris to work with Fania Fenelon getting material for her story.

Early in April I got a call from the lawyer of Frank Sinatra, Martin Gang, asking me if I knew a book called The Execution of Private Slovik, by William Bradford Huie. And I didn't know it. He sent the book down to me. I read it at once--oh, he said Sinatra wanted to make this film; he didn't want to act in it, but he wanted to direct



it, and he wanted to know whether I was interested in doing the screenplay. I read the book and I was very much interested in doing the screenplay. But there was an important question about it because I did not agree with the author's interpretation of his own material; I couldn't agree with his conclusions, and I didn't know whether Sinatra would agree with mine. So they asked me to come up, and I came up and saw Sinatra for the first time in, oh, I guess, twelve, thirteen years, and we discussed the book.

Now, this was the account of the life of a man, [Eddie] Slovik, who was the only American shot for desertion from the army since the Civil War (although there had in fact been thousands upon thousands of deserters in World War I and World War II, but no one had ever been shot for it). Huie's conclusion was that this was an obvious miscarriage of justice that he should have been the only one shot. But I looked at it differently from his own material.

It so happened that Slovik's desertion was not one of emotional panic which occurred in the middle of an action. He had come to Europe, and shortly after coming near the battle zone, he had been close to some shelling for a little bit, and he had decided that he was simply not going to serve. And so he did something unusual.





He wrote a note to the army authorities saying that he was going to desert, and if they sent him to the front lines, he would desert. When he did this, it was just at the time when there was the Battle of the Bulge, and the position of U.S. troops in that sector was very bad; there was great danger of a German breakthrough. And Slovik's attitude seemed so brazen to the high command at that particular time that they felt they couldn't overlook it. As one general said (it may have been Eisen--no, it wasn't Eisenhower . . . another one), "If I let Slovik go without a court-martial, I won't be able to look in the face of those poor guys out there who are lying in foxholes in the mud and the cold and getting wounded and killed."

And when Slovik was court-martialed, the men who were his judges were not West Pointers, they were civilians in uniform. And on the first ballot they all voted for death, and when they found out what they had done, they were shocked, and they said, "Well, wait a moment, let's think this over and take another ballot." And they talked about it and took another ballot, and they all voted the same way. I believe, I'm not sure, that they took a third ballot. But it was under these circumstances that Slovik was shot. And, for me, the villain in this was not the United States Army, it was war. It was the whole concatenation of circumstances which had brought him to do what he did,



and the army to do what it did, and I just felt that I would not indict the army; I would not follow Huie's conclusion.

Well, Sinatra agreed with this, and we discussed it further and arrived at complete agreement about how to handle this. He told me that there was a young actor on TV that he thought would be very good in the role. He told me his name: it was [Steve] McQueen. I said I didn't know anything about American TV, but I'd try to catch him in a program, and Sinatra told me which one he was on, and I looked at it and said, oh, yes, I think he would be fine for the role. [laughter] Sinatra told me that he wanted to announce to the public that he had hired me. In the case of Trumbo, Preminger had announced that Trumbo had done the screenplay of Exodus, and it was a fait accompli. But Sinatra didn't want to do that: he wanted to announce it in advance. He said it was very important to him, and he'd thought about it a long time, and that if the American Legion didn't like it, that was too bad, that he had hated the American Legion from the time he was a kid and that they would run into the goddamnedest buzz saw that they ever had seen.

Well, I was of course very happy about this. I felt that with Trumbo now announced as having been hired, and that with me hired, the blacklist would be over for everyone.



I got a call from Martin Gang asking who my agent was, and even though Ingo Preminger had been my agent on Exodus and I liked Ingo very much, I thought this was an opportunity to bring in another blacklisted person, and I gave as my agent George Willner, who was an old friend but who had never been my agent. Willner had been blacklisted around '51, but now, in the last year, as I knew because of our personal relations, he had been trying to get back as an agent and had been operating in New York. His name was perfectly agreeable to Gang, and an agreement was made for me to write the screenplay for \$75,000. I had told Sinatra that I had some work I wanted to do in Europe for several months and would begin the screenplay afterwards, and he said that was perfectly all right with him.

At this time, I also took occasion to see David Miller about the script of Silver Nutmeg, and he said that he was busy with other work but that he was uncertain about my script and wanted to think more about it, and we agreed to meet again on it when we each were free.

Before I left Los Angeles for New York, I had a call from Martin Gang, asking if I would mind waiting until the New Hampshire primary was over because Sinatra was a known supporter of John Kennedy, who was running for the Democratic candidacy for presidential election, and he was in the New Hampshire primary. And I said, no, I wouldn't mind waiting at all.



When I was in New York for a week or so, Kennedy won in New Hampshire and then immediately headed for the West Virginia primary. And I began to wonder whether the announcement would be postponed if he won in West Virginia and then postponed until the convention, and then if he became the candidate, whether it would be postponed until the election. And this troubled me because I wanted to see the blacklist broken. I called Gang and asked him about this, and he said he couldn't answer, and he told me to call Sinatra, who was then in Florida doing some singing and what Sinatra calls saloon dates, which were nightclub performances. I did call him and I said I wondered if he announced it, whether it would interfere with fund raising that he might be doing for Kennedy, and he said, "No, I'm not doing any fund raising for Kennedy. I'm not doing anything special at all. I just support him because I think he's the best man for the job." And I said, "Well, then what about making the announcement of your hiring me?" And he said, "Fine. I'll do it." So I then went off to Europe. And when I was in Tel Aviv and had been in Israel for, I don't know, let's say a week or so . . . let me see . . . I forget just how long . . . about that length of time. . . .





TAPE NUMBER: XXIV, SIDE TWO

JANUARY 9, 1979

GARDNER: You were in Tel Aviv.

MALTZ: Yes, in Tel Aviv I received a letter from one of my brothers with a package of press clippings announcing that Sinatra had fired me. Now, Sinatra's announcement that he had hired me was made on the twentieth of March and. . . . Hold up just a second. [tape recorder turned off] The story of his hiring me got a great deal of attention. The New York Times had a featured article which started: "Frank Sinatra has flouted the blacklist tradition of Hollywood by hiring a writer who for political reasons has not been permitted to write movies under his own name," and went on. It was treated as a piece of news by the New York Times, but the Hearst press treated it as though there had been some natural calamity like a volcanic eruption and the death of millions of people. Because they had headlines on their newspapers such as this one in the Hollywood Citizen News: Fuss Over Sinatra's Script Man, and in great big black letters, top of the page.

On the twenty-second of March, two days after the announcement, Senator Mundt and others described my being hired as shocking--Mundt in Congress. And John Wayne and Robert Taylor spoke up, and the Hearst press started a national campaign to have me "dumped." On the twenty-fourth, the Maltz controversy was exhumed. On the twenty-fifth,



the Catholic War Veterans said they would boycott Private Slovik if I wrote it. And on the twenty-eighth, there was a public advertisement from Frank Sinatra which said, among other things, "I spoke to many screenwriters, but it was not until I talked to Albert Maltz that I found a writer who saw the screenplay in exactly the terms I wanted. This is, the army was right." He then went on further to say, "I would also like to comment on the attacks from certain quarters on Senator John Kennedy by connecting him with my decision on employing a screenwriter. This type of partisan politics is hitting below the belt. I make movies. I do not ask the advice of Senator Kennedy on whom I should hire. Senator Kennedy does not ask me how he should vote in the Senate." And also on the twenty-eighth of March, there was an editorial in the Journal American saying, "Dump Maltz and get yourself a true American writer." On the twenty-ninth. . . .

GARDNER: You were unaware of all this?

MALTZ: I was unaware of all this, but I got the clippings . . .

GARDNER: Later.

MALTZ: I got the clippings later, yes. I was completely unaware of it. On the twenty-ninth, there was an editorial writer in the German American--[laughter] in the [New York] Journal American, [which] said, in talking about me, "Some of the other members of the Hollywood Ten have recanted.



But not so with Comrade Maltz as is evidenced by the following revelations obtained from authoritative sources. Following his release from federal prison April 2, 1951, after serving a sentence for contempt of Congress . . . " (and so on) ". . . he went to Mexico City. Maltz was considered the leader of the American Communist group of exiles in Mexico City. Maltz obtained passport number 120028, dated August 8, 1958, ostensibly for a visit to England, France, Holland and Italy. There was litigation over the original refusal of the State Department to grant it. Maltz, without telling the State Department of his intended itinerary, visited the Soviet Union and such iron curtain countries as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany, hobnobbing with Red leaders along the line. Maltz is a member of the Writers Union in Moscow."

[laughter] Now, here's a guy who takes the fact that I visited those countries to do this kind of article, makes the assertion about me having been a member of the . . . about my being a member of the Writers Union of Moscow, and this was the kind of campaign that was put on.

And on the fourth of April, Sinatra fired me. There were big headlines in the New York Mirror and on the twelfth, he took another ad explaining, in very unfortunate terms, that the American people had voted that they didn't want me to write this screenplay. Well, of course the



American people had not voted any such thing; there merely had been a campaign in the Hearst press, with the support of the American Legion and Catholic War Veterans and so on. And it was just an unfortunate phrasing for which I don't blame him at all. There were publicists and lawyers and so on who were involved. I have never been told what really happened. I know, without any question, that Sinatra was sincere in hiring me, he was sincere in what he wanted to do. I'm sure that he was tremendously upset by the pressure that was put on him, and since he was prepared for attacks on him by the American Legion, I can only assume that something completely unexpected happened which he felt he could not fight.

It has been suggested, and even was in the press in a column or two, that John Kennedy's father appealed to him to fire me because this could be used against his son. Now, interestingly enough, there may be some real practical point to it, because Kennedy only beat Nixon by 100,000 votes. It's not inconceivable that 100,000 votes could have been lost by Red-baiting Kennedy with Sinatra and me. And it's only in that area that I can see any possible psychological explanation for Sinatra's behavior. I'm sure that he was very unhappy over it. It was, for me, a second very unfortunate occurrence. It was my second chance to break through and I didn't. Actually, the opposite happened:





it made me a much hotter potato than I had been before because in this same year, 1960, three other men who were blacklisted broke through--In England three other men broke through by a film made in England: Joe Losey, the director, and the writers Millard Lampell and Ben Barzman. But it was four years more before I was able to sign a contract under my own name.

GARDNER: Have you spoken to Sinatra since?

MALTZ: No, no. I've not seen Sinatra and I've not had any communication from him. Oh, there's a little aftermath that I want to put on record. My agent, George Willner, had not been able to afford an office at that time. He had been given a desk and a telephone in the office of some left-wing attorneys. About a week after I learned of the firing, I got a very fat letter from the attorneys with a whole brief already prepared, and with them urging that I institute a legal suit against Sinatra. Number one, I had no desire whatsoever to sue Sinatra; and number two, I had no desire to get involved in any more legal suits. I'd had enough of those. And so I rejected this, and even though they urged me further, I just absolutely refused. But there was something more to this that I didn't find out until fourteen years later.

Sinatra through his attorney, had offered Willner full payment for the script after firing me. But the lawyers



went over the head of Willner and rejected it because they wanted to sue, and they expected me to agree to a suit without asking me. By the time Willner heard from me from Israel that I wasn't going to sue, the lawyers had gotten Sinatra's lawyers so furious that it was all Willner could do to get a settlement of half of the money. Now, this was real ambulance chasing on the part of some upright left-wing lawyers.

I stayed in Israel until my wife was launched on her project at the kibbutz, and then I went to Paris. I worked with Fania Fenelon for about a month, asking questions and taking notes. And I was projecting a two-volume novel: one about her and the French Resistance, and the second about Auschwitz. And then we went to Poland in order to see Auschwitz. My friend and former agent Max Lieber, now living in Warsaw, went there with us. And we had the complete run of the camps with a guide with us. This is the time in which I want to put something on record that I perhaps will write a book about, but life may not permit me to do it and so I want to state my thesis here in the hope that, if I can't write it, perhaps someone else will.

There is a myth that the Jews who died in Auschwitz and other such camps went knowingly but unresistingly to their deaths in the gas chambers. Now, this myth has been



considerably sponsored by a psychoanalyst, Bruno Bettelheim. Bettelheim, born in Germany, was in a concentration camp for one year before World War II and came out to write a book about it, and because of this particular experience, assumed the mantle of someone who knew all about concentration camps. Well, indeed he knew his own experience; but he didn't know, and has not troubled to find out, what happened in the concentration camps of World War II. It has been said to me, and I'm not sure yet, that this myth was also spread by Hannah Arendt, author of Eichmann in Jerusalem and other works. And I am currently reading more of her work to investigate this. However, for reasons that surely go way beyond Bettelheim, this myth has been accepted in the entire world. Nevertheless, it is a myth, and I began to perceive how fallacious it was in my visit to Auschwitz.

For instance, in the summer of 1944, when all the Jews in Hungary that the Nazis could find were shipped to Auschwitz, the trains came in so fast that frequently they were backed up because the people could not be killed, and their bodies disposed of, fast enough. Actually, in that summer the crematoria could not handle the number of people who were killed, and so the Nazis began burning people on wooden pyres, bodies on wooden pyres. When the trains backed up, there would be occasions in which they would be opened and the people inside would be let out. That



summer was very hot, and the women's orchestra was allowed out of the building they were in (which was called a block) and was allowed to practice out of doors. Since their block was right close to the electrified twelve-foot-high barbed-wire fence that enclosed their camp, they were close to the railroad tracks.

The railroad tracks separated the men's camp from the women's camp, and there was an area, on each side of the tracks, of earth. And the people would come out of the railroad cars, and old men would start to say prayers, children would begin to bounce balls and run around, and people would come over close to the wire and call in, in different languages, and say, "Hey, what's it like inside?" Now, no one who knew he was going to his death would say "What's it like inside?" They found themselves in an area between two barbed-wire fences, and they saw women playing music, women in prisoners' stripes. Now, the women were forbidden to talk to them, and even if they had said anything, what were they going to say? What would be the use of saying, "It's hell in here"? What could the people do about it? To say that to them would be to do no more than to give them anguish. And in fact--oh, by the way, this which I say was not just what was told me by Fania but I knew this from others; for instance, another woman, a Belgian woman now resident in Paris who was in the orchestra





also, was Violette Jacquet. Her maiden name had been Silberstein. And she told me the same.

Now in fact, the Nazis had carried out a very simple and logical policy of not causing trouble for themselves. They always told people who were going to be deported from their own country that they were sending them east for resettlement; and in one place they said, "You will work on farms"; in another place they said, "You'll work in a cement factory." The train that took Fania from France had in it people who said they had heard five or six different things of what they were going to do. But no one knew that they were going to a camp like Auschwitz. And this policy of the Germans, the fact that this is what people believed, I have learned from an endless number of people that I interviewed.

For instance, very recently, because I was discussing this matter with the dean of Tel Aviv University, I asked some friends who were in my home about this. I asked, "Did any one you know, who was deported, ever know what was going to happen to them?" Now, the people I asked were the Czech film director, Jan Kadar, his wife Judith, who was Hungarian by birth and upbringing, and whose mother was in Auschwitz. I asked, in the same evening, Vladimir Pozner, a Frenchman, and his wife, Ida, who was German-born, and I asked the dean of Tel Aviv University, who was in



Auschwitz with the author Elie Wiesel, and all of them said "No one knew." They were all told they were going for resettlement and some work or other. Now in fact, if the Nazis had not carried out this policy, then we couldn't have had the kind of situation I described of people coming out of trains and saying, "Hey, what's it like in there?"

Furthermore, still to be seen in Auschwitz today are the storehouses of musical instruments, of suitcases, of children's toys, and of other such objects which people brought with them. Now, the Nazis had a desperate need for transportation for warfare; they wouldn't have allowed valuable space to have been taken up in the boxcars by such things as cellos and bass violins if there hadn't been a purpose to it. But if they had not allowed it, it would have meant that they would have had to-- If people knew that they were going to their deaths, then from wherever they were taken from--Athens, Budapest, any other place--they would have had to drag each individual person onto the boxcar. The number of troops that would have been needed in order to pile them into the boxcars would have been enormous. This way they just did it with half a dozen troops, saying, get in, you're going for resettlement.

Bettelheim also spoke of Jews of "ghetto psychology" who went to their death like sheep. But in Auschwitz, in fact, there were not only Jews: there were 10,000 captured



Russian soldiers who went to their death; there were 25,000 gypsies; the first people in Auschwitz were Polish Christians, including priests, who helped set up the camp and put it in shape. And so this kind of sweeping generalization on his part is absolute nonsense.

Further support of what I say is in the hard fact of the way in which the Nazis constructed the gas chambers. That is to say, people went down steps into an area. . . . Oh, first when they came in, first when people came out of the boxcars, a selection was made, the significance of which the people didn't know. Some were told to go to the left and some to the right. The old people, children, people in general who could not perform work satisfactorily, were told that they were going to take showers. They were led to dressing rooms underground. Men and women were separated, and small children went with their mothers. They were given towels and soap and told to undress and to remember the number of the hook on which they put their clothes. Why would they have participated in this farce if they had known what was going to happen? And if they had known, of course, then each one of them would have had to have been dragged, screaming, to their deaths. And finally they were sent into a large tiled room that had what seemed to be shower spigots in the roof; and the moment the doors were slammed shut, cyanide pellets were thrown in



from the vents. It was only then that they knew. And if one or two of them with special sensitivity felt that something was wrong as they were being taken into the shower room, what could they have done?

GARDNER: But. . . .

MALTZ: Yes?

GARDNER: Now, what about those who went in the other direction? They must have realized when they never saw. . . .

MALTZ: I want to tell you. For instance, Violette, whom I have mentioned, was sent in one direction and her father and mother in the other. And she was put through processing, and the next morning, when she had her first opportunity, she said to the capo in charge of the block where she had been sent to sleep, "Can I find out what happened to my mother and my father?" And the capo said, "Which way were they sent?" And she said, "They were sent to the right" (or the left, I forget at the moment which direction it was). And the capo said, "Come here," and took her outside and pointed to two huge smokestacks which were belching black smoke. And she said, "You see those smokestacks? There's your mother and there's your father." And that's how Violette found out about the crematoria and the gas chambers. This was exactly representative of the way other people found out.

GARDNER: So those who were already in the camps, then, did know?





MALTZ: Those people who were in the camps knew, yes, and there were tens of thousands of them who did go docilely to their death, knowing; but who were they, and why did they go that way? Well, as I said, they were not necessarily Jews of ghetto psychology. Several hundred thousand inmates of Auschwitz in its three years who died were not Jews. In addition to those that I have mentioned, there were non-Jewish political prisoners, many of them Communists from Poland, France, Greece, Holland, Yugoslavia. Now, these prisoners, first of all, were unarmed--take them from the moment they came in--they were unarmed, they were confined within electrified barbed-wire fences twelve feet high, they were constantly under the gaze of guards in watchtowers who had heavy machine guns. At night, searchlights played on the whole camp. They were no more able to revolt than did American prisoners of war in Germany, or German prisoners of war in England or the United States. There were incidents of individual attacks on SS guards, but that was not a general revolt.

Now, with few exceptions, in the course of a few weeks or months, these prisoners were turned into dying creatures by malnutrition, harsh overwork, and physical abuse. For instance, at times of the counting of the prisoners, they might be kept two, four, six, eight, ten hours on their knees in all sorts of weather while being counted. What



did that do to the human body and spirit? They suffered constant psychological shock. Let me give one example.

The morning after Fania was in her block, a woman, ill with dysentery, soiled the floor, unable to contain herself. The capo, a woman--actually, a German criminal left in charge of the prisoners--came over with a club and beat her to death. Now, when you have come from a different world and this is just a "trivial" incident that you see, the psychological shock of that is incredible--as it is to go to the latrine once a day and be beaten on the head and shoulders with a club by someone who yells, "Quicker, quicker." In Auschwitz so many varied ailments afflicted prisoners that doctors there had never seen examples of them before, in addition to more familiar ones like typhus and dysentery. So what happened is that people became apathetic, human beings weighing 90 to 100 pounds. And when they were herded from the hospitals or from barracks into trucks, and knew they were going to the gas chambers, they were no longer capable of any kind of resistance.

I will finish off by saying that I am trying to get someone to write this book because I don't particularly want to write it, but I feel that it should be done because this myth is so unfortunate and pernicious. And for anyone who wants to undertake it, the dean of Tel Aviv University would be able to furnish, for modest funds, Ph.D. students



who would go and interview former inmates of concentration camps or of Auschwitz from different countries and from different parts of different countries, and provide actual evidence by name that could be kept on record of what I've said just in terms of analysis.

Fania Fenelon and I returned to Paris, and I continued my work with her until the end of August. I returned sooner than I wanted to Mexico because of family problems. I began reading and sending questions to her. I don't think I've mentioned that when I first met her she had a large lump on one leg which she had neglected to go to a physician about. And so when I was in Paris, it had already been operated upon, and it was a melanoma cancer. After I returned to Mexico, I received word in the fall that the cancer had moved up to her groin and that she needed another operation, and I went over to Paris. But after I got there, the operation was postponed and we worked together for another month. And then I came back to Mexico again. (I might mention that in these flights I went either by Air Canada to avoid U.S. immigration, in one case on a flight via Portugal with a layover in Lisbon. But on one return flight, I couldn't avoid a Miami transit stop, and so I had to go through customs there and, once again I was detained, and the plane was held up for a half an hour until they got word from the FBI in Washington.)



I continued work on the novel about Fania's experiences for the balance of '60 and the first half of '61. My tentative title at that time was The Orchestra.

The winter issue of the Southwest Review, a literary quarterly issued by a university in Texas [Southern Methodist University], announced the winner of the second annual John McGinnis Memorial Award for the best work of fiction appearing in the Southwest Review during 1960 and 1961. The winner was Julian Silva, of Mexico City, for his story "With Laughter." There was a prize of \$200, and Julian Silva was one of my pen names. This story had appeared in 1961.

During the early months of '61, while I was continuing to work on The Orchestra, I met another woman who had been in Auschwitz. Her name was Dounia Wasserstrom. She had been born in Russia, had lived her adolescence in Poland, had migrated to France and there married an airplane manufacturer. She spoke Russian, Polish, French, and German, and our way of communicating was in Spanish. In Auschwitz, because of her ability at languages, she was a secretary to a gestapo officer. Fania Fenelon and a great many other of the prisoners who survived until the end of 1944, when the Russians were approaching Auschwitz, had been transferred by train to another concentration camp in Germany, Bergen Belsen. But Dounia had remained until the very end and she, with about, I think, 40,000





other prisoners, both men and women, had been in a march that left in a snowstorm from Auschwitz and walked toward Germany. Dounia had bad footwear and her feet became swollen. When the time came in which they got the first rest after about eight hours of marching, she and a friend of hers who walked by her side, a Dutchwoman, were put into a barn the floor of which was covered by hay. Dounia knew that she couldn't go on, and anyone who couldn't continue to march was shot by the Nazis. She saw by the way in which the building was constructed that there was probably a depth of hay beneath where they were sitting, and she said that she wanted to try and escape by burrowing into the hay. Her friend decided to do it with her, and they found that they could go down deep into the hay, and air still came down, and they did that.

When the Nazis roused the prisoners to go on, they remained and were not found although the Nazis poked bayonets into the hay to see if anyone had done that. In fact, they slept then for about twenty-four hours. They awakened to hear a men's group resting in there and then saw a man burrowing down toward them, and they waited in silence. When the men's group had departed, they discovered that four men had done the same thing as they, and now all the prisoners had passed and they had escaped. And she told me what happened to them after that, and I felt that it would make a very good short novel.



I continued to work on The Orchestra, but in the summer I spent five weeks in Los Angeles seeking work, film work, but I found I was untouchable. Others were now starting to work. Ned Young had gotten work, so had Michael Wilson, under their own names. I spoke to Ingo Preminger and told him the story of Dounia and her friends, and asked if he thought it might sell to films. He said that he felt very confident it could sell if I would write it up as a novel, and I thought that this might be an excellent solution to my financial problem. The Orchestra was going to require several more years of work and I was beginning to need funds, and I thought if I could write this in a short space of time and sell it to films, it would finance the writing of The Orchestra.

I wrote of my decision to Fania, and she was very furious about this because she wanted her book to come out, for which I can't blame her. I completed the Dounia story, which I called A Tale of One January, by June '62, and my agent in New York sent it out to publishers, and Ingo submitted it to film studios. It found no publisher and no film studio wanted it. Let me pause for a moment.  
[tape recorder turned off]

Before I left Mexico in the summer of '62 I agreed to write a screenplay as a kind of matter of friendship with Gabriel Figueroa. This was to be a film made on Traven's



book Bridge in the Jungle, which at least a dozen people, starting with John Huston, had taken an option on over the years but had never been able to crack as a story. And I felt I knew how to do it, and, because Figueroa asked me to and I was appreciative of what he had done for me, which I've already mentioned, I said I would do it provided he would leave the date of my completing it open in case I got some paying work in Hollywood. And that was agreed to.

While I was up in Hollywood, Margaret went to Israel with the manuscript of her book because she wanted it checked by the people in the kibbutz before she submitted it for publication. I'll mention in passing that the book, called The Hand of Mordechai, which was published in . . . I don't think it was published in the United States, it was published in England and was a best-seller in Israel . . . and is, I think, a very fine book. It has some of the most vivid battle scenes I've ever read in a book, even though, when Margaret started it, she wondered how she could possibly write about battles since she hadn't experienced it. But by taking down very careful notes of what the people had to say, the scenes came out magnificently.

In Hollywood I discussed some revisions of Silver Nutmeg with Miller, but that work was interrupted a month later when Margaret returned from Israel. Although I've given no preliminaries to this, at that time our marriage broke up,



and she went back to Mexico. My work was interrupted for some months after that, but I resumed work in October.

By the end of January, '63, it became clear that the revision of Nutmeg was becoming a second screenplay, and I wanted some more remuneration for that, modest as the first payment had been. Miller and his attorney refused, and so I went on strike and stopped work.

At the end of April I got a lucky job through the Paul Kohner Agency and went to Italy for five weeks to give my opinion of four films that an Italian producer, [Franco] Cristaldi, intended to make in English. He had a very distinguished record; among his films were Love Italian Style\* and The Organizer. And the man who wanted me there was someone who was going to go into partnership with him on the four films, an Italian film distributor by the name of [Robert] Haggiag. I said that I felt none of them would be successful, and Haggiag pulled out of the whole deal because of my judgment, and it turned out they weren't successful. I wish I had been as accurate as that at other times of my life.

A little after my return from Italy I went to Mexico to work out the terms of a divorce with Margaret. The division of community property and the need to pay alimony left me with an absolute need to earn money. I couldn't return to work on The Orchestra as I had hoped. If not

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\*Divorce Italian Style





for the blacklist, which was still affecting me, I might have gotten a good advance on it from a publisher as other authors do, but I was not in a position to get that. During that period I wrote the script of Bridge in the Jungle. And by August I had a new agreement on Nutmeg with David Miller consisting primarily of future promises and very little money in hand, and I finished it on the first days of January. It turned out that all of my work and two long screenplays went for nothing because Miller went blank on the project and said that he just didn't know, he couldn't offer any judgment on the screenplay whatsoever. And after about a year United Artists dropped the option. This is a very good example--I've gone into this at this length because it's a very good example of what could and did happen under the blacklist. It never would have happened to me, of course, if I hadn't been blacklisted.

In January '64 I signed a film contract under my own name for the first time since Naked City in 1946. It was not the sort of material I would have chosen, but I felt I could write a sound screenplay. Most important, I felt that now I was at last on my way to reestablishing the position I once had in which I could do screenplays, save money, and return to fiction. I was very keenly aware of the fact that I was now fifty-five years old and that for the past fifteen years I had been excluded under my own



name from the American marketplace--magazines, book publication, movies, and TV. And this was the opportunity that I had hoped would come. I needed it because I had no reason now, any more than earlier, to count on my earning a living from my fiction. Furthermore, in another ten years I would be sixty-five, and in fifteen, seventy. Ever since the time in the thirties that the Theatre Union had given the Civic Repertory Theatre for a benefit for the great cartoonist Art Young, I had had a horror of living an impecunious old age. I didn't want any benefits given for me. So there was a need I had now to earn and harbor some financial resources for the years ahead. I could no longer take the attitude that if I could save a few thousand dollars, I could turn to write a novel because the future lay so far ahead. However, for various reasons, my hopes were not fulfilled. I did get some film work, and I earned and accumulated some needed money, but I didn't get the film credits that would have made me a writer in demand. I didn't, in the main, get offers of good material from major studios. Most of the offers came from independents who had bad material and were looking for some writer who might, by the magic of his talent, turn it into something good. I turned down about thirty projects in ten years.



TAPE NUMBER: XXV, SIDE ONE

JANUARY 9, 1979

MALTZ: However, I did get one producer-writer offer from Universal which would have paid me very well, but I turned it down because I simply did not want to set my path into one of being just a filmmaker. And if I had accepted the offer, it would have involved a commitment on my part to write and produce films and continue doing that. That's what would have been expected of me.

I've reckoned up two periods of my writing life, and the comparison is very telling. In the first period I had five screenplays and two short screenplays produced. These were periods of more or less the same period of time. The forties and, let's say, from about--no, from . . . this is a period from '32 to '50, and from '62 to '78. In the first period I had five screenplays and two short screenplays produced; in the second period I wrote twelve screenplays, but only one was produced and two are now pending, with no certainty about them. With more than twice as much time having gone to film, it reduced time for my other work. So in the first period, I had three novels published, in the second, one published and one unpublished; in the first period, three full-length and three short plays produced, and in the second, one unproduced; and in



each period, one volume of stories. Now, there are varied reasons for this marked difference in the two periods, but I'm not going to go over them. The key question is whether it demonstrates a diminution of my powers as a writer, and I'm confident it doesn't. And I think there's objective evidence to support my feeling, although I won't go into that either. The question is a key one for me because I'm now entering a period in which I'm going to write only fiction, and I'm going to begin with short stories; whether or not I follow with some novels will depend upon unknown factors in the future.

I've covered the fifteen years from 1964 until now so far as my work is concerned, and now I want to go over other matters. I married for the second time in 1964. My wife, Rosemary [Wylde], died in 1968. A year and a half later I married my present wife, Esther [Engelberg].

In the year 1966, I received a most poignant letter from two Greeks living in the port city of Piraeus . . . no, it was in 1965. As I recall, it was addressed to me in Mexico, and I really don't know how it reached me but it did. They told me that they had just been released after eighteen years in a concentration camp. I could guess at once that they must have been members of the Communist party, and of the Greek forces that had been fighting the government at that time and that had been





crushed by English troops. They said that their concentration camp had been on an island and that for most of that time they had had no newspapers and no books; but that in the several years before they were released, they had been allowed books and papers, and that an English friend had sent them some books, among which was my novel The Cross and the Arrow. They had read it, and they had made a Greek translation of it, and all 500 prisoners on the island had read it. And now they were asking me for the right to try and get a Greek publisher.

Well, I was of course overwhelmed by this tale and wrote them that of course they could have the rights to it. Then they wrote back after a bit and said they had found out that it might help publication if I would reduce the royalty rate I asked for, and I said they could make the royalty rate anything they wished. And we had something of a continued correspondence. I sent a New Year's card to them at the turn of 1966, and I didn't get one back from them. And in the last days of May, I went to New York with a producer, Malcolm Stuart, to see Jules Dassin, who was there at the time because he had directed his wife in a musical theater version of Never on Sunday. Malcolm Stuart hoped to make a film out of my novel A Long Day in a Short Life, and he had called Dassin to tell him about it and ask him if he wanted to direct it. Dassin was interested,



and so we had gone there to talk with him. He and Melina Mercouri were in a state of high tension because, just a few days before we came, she had had an interview on TV about the political situation in Greece, where some colonels had taken power in a coup d'etat, a military coup d'etat, and she had suddenly burst into tears and said that they were fascists and that people should not go as tourists to Greece and Greece should be boycotted and so on. At that time, due to death threats that she had received, they were having to be guarded by both the police and the FBI. And I knew then why my two correspondents in Piraeus had not answered my New Year's card. They either had known what was coming and had gone underground, or they had been rearrested after their few years of liberty and were once again in prison. I've never heard from them since. Their names are Damigos Nikos and Dimitrios Kanelopoulos. And my New Year's letter to them finally came back, and on it was "address unknown."

After my return from Mexico in 1962, I took up residence in the United States and only went back to Mexico on business or some visits. My public appearances in these past eighteen years have been only very occasional, by deliberation. A number of times at the Unitarian church, once in San Francisco on behalf of Morton Sobell before he was released, and a speech in defense of Angela Davis



when she was on trial, and a few other occasions such as an annual meeting of the Civil Liberties Union in 1974. I rejected all other invitations because I did not want to get involved in that type of public activity again as a general rule, and I wanted maximum time for writing. Actually, despite the negative results in those eighteen years, I spent much more time writing than I did in the first period. Of course, not too long after I came up to reside in the States again, the Vietnam War occurred. I was vehemently opposed to it from the beginning, and I considered the alleged Tonkin Gulf attack on U.S. ships to be a transparent phony. But again, I deliberately refrained from public speaking or activity in any of the committees and, in this case, because I didn't want to give reactionaries a chance to Red-bait the committees on my account. I gave money, and I would go to large demonstrations where I would be one more person on the scene, but that was all.

GARDNER: Were you at Century Plaza?

MALTZ: No, that was the one thing I was not at. I had some urgent, I think it was a medical thing. It was the only one of those things that I missed. I was up in San Francisco, and a lot of the demonstrations downtown and so on, but I was not at Century Plaza. And that was dreadful, I know. From 1956 on, that is to say, from the time of the Khrushchev report. . . .



GARDNER: Your tape ended.

MALTZ: Oh, thank you. [tape recorder turned off] From the time of the Khrushchev report in 1956, my attitude toward all the socialist countries was affected by what I knew had gone on during the Stalin era. I now considered all of them to have seriously deficient political systems. Now, this didn't, on my part, mean an embrace of capitalism, which I considered seriously deficient for other reasons; but it did mean that I no longer found acceptable any explanation or justification for those states in which dissent was discouraged or made a crime.

There were specific developments in the post-Khrushchev era in the Soviet Union that aroused my indignation because they indicated a retrogression to Stalinist oppression. First was the arrest and trial of two writers in February '66. They were Yuri Daniel and Andrei Sinyavsky for publishing works abroad which were critical of the Soviet Union and for which they used pen names. Well, this was as though I should be arrested for publishing in England, under a pen name, an article critical of the United States involvement in Vietnam. The charge against them was anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation. A loose movement of Soviet dissidents came to life in support of the two writers, and in January '67 there were two demonstrations in Moscow on their behalf. This led to the arrests and





imprisonment of four of the demonstrators. They were charged with participating in group activities that grossly violated public order. This didn't stop protests which, to the contrary, increased, and since then a kind of guerilla warfare has gone on with the government, the secret police, and the courts against the dissenters. I won't attempt to describe these events further, but I do need to comment on two cases: that of General Piotr Grigorenko and of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

I followed the newspaper and magazine accounts closely, and I became a subscriber to the magazine called A Chronicle of Current Events, which was an underground publication in the Soviet Union by the dissidents and was translated into English in London. The case of Solzhenitsyn is well known, of course. I read his work and admired it without--admired most of it, let's say--without considering him the Tolstoy that some Western propagandists have claimed him to be. (Incidentally, I think that the book published as 1914 is the most serious failure of any serious novelist I've ever read. The book is inexplicable to me, it's so badly put together. But on the other hand, I thought Cancer Ward was a very fine novel.) I was extremely indignant about what was happening to his work because after Khrushchev's downfall his novel One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich began to be removed from libraries and was no longer in



print, and no new books of his could be published. He was dismissed from the Writers Union, which meant permanent blacklisting, and he was persecuted in other ways.

The policy that made me more indignant than any other was the incarceration of a certain number of the dissidents in psychiatric institutions. The Soviet logic on this score was simple: any Soviet citizen who was critical of the regime was giving proof that he was mentally ill. Because who other than a mentally unbalanced person would be against the regime? Major General Grigorenko was a professor of cybernetics in the Frunze Military Academy, which was the equivalent of our West Point. He was a decorated hero of World War II who had been severely wounded several times. He was the author of many articles on military tactics. And he began open criticism of the government in 1962, saying that de-Stalinization had not gone far enough. He was reproved and told to be silent. He continued to criticize. He was dismissed from his post, stripped of his rank and pension, and expelled from the party. And he worked as a loader, which is hard physical labor, in order to earn a living, in spite of his age and his disabilities (he had problems with his legs). And then on February 1, 1964, he was arrested and charged with anti-Soviet activity. But his case was not investigated or brought to trial because he was sent to the Serbsky



Institute, which was the main forensic psychiatric institute in the Soviet Union, and there he was found to be "mentally disturbed." On the basis of this finding, he was sent to a Leningrad psychiatric hospital--no, he was sent to a Leningrad psychiatric prison for compulsory treatment. Incidentally, a mentally unbalanced person cannot be tried in the Soviet Union so in this way he was not allowed to defend himself against the charge that he was either anti-Soviet or mentally unbalanced. From 1964 until he was allowed to leave the Soviet Union in 1978, and then stripped of his citizenship so that he couldn't return, Grigorenko spent as much time in psychiatric hospitals as outside of them; and whenever he was out, he returned to be an active dissident. His case, and many like his, formed the basis of my unpublished novel, The Eyewitness Report.

In the case of Solzhenitsyn I did something that had an unexpected and surprising result. In December '72 I read an interview with him in A Chronicle of Current Events. The interviewers were the Moscow correspondents of the New York Times and the Washington Post, and their interviews appeared in their newspapers on April 3. But I didn't read them at that time; as I say, I didn't read them until December '72. Now, in the interview Solzhenitsyn stated that he was having a desperate time financially because he was not allowed to earn anything at that time. He said



that he had lived six years very frugally on the royalties from Ivan Denisovich, and then he had lived three years more on a bequest from a writer of children's stories who had died. He could not get any of the royalties that had accrued to him in the West, and the Nobel Prize money had not come to him; and if any of it did, most of it would be taken by the state in taxes. In addition, he described "the contaminated zone that has been created around my family, and to this date there are people dismissed from their jobs for having visited my house a few years ago. . . . There even have been cases when my name was used as a litmus paper to check the loyalty of applicants for graduate studentships or some privileged position. They are asked, 'Have you read Solzhenitsyn? What do you think of him?' and the fate of the applicant could depend upon the reply." And I thought, my God, in my one-act play "The Morrison Case," I had the shipyard worker asked by the loyalty board, "Have you read any of the books of Howard Fast?"

I decided to write a letter to the New York Times about this . . . well, more than just about it--I'll explain: I decided to write a letter in which I would offer Solzhenitsyn my uncollected royalties for books published in the Soviet Union. Now, although I couldn't have great hope that the Soviet authorities would permit this, nevertheless the fact





that they had allowed him to receive a bequest in a will made me think that there was some possibility that they might permit this. I knew that if I merely wrote the letter in private to the Soviet authorities nothing would happen, and therefore I hoped that it would be published in the Times.

I also had a basis for calculating roughly what my royalties might be since, as I stated earlier, I received 17,000 rubles for 100,000 copies of The Cross and the Arrow. Now, after leaving the Soviet Union, I had received a letter in, I think, 1962 stating that over 2 million copies of my books had been published in the Soviet Union. If I then calculated at the same rate of 17,000 rubles for 100,000 copies, it was easy to arrive at what I would be owed, and that even excluded what copies might have been printed between '62 and '72. I didn't count that. I also subtracted from the total the \$700 that I had received way back around 1937 and the \$10,000 that I had received around 1955. I then did another thing. There had been a change in the ruble so that what was formerly 1,000--or what was formerly 17,000 would have become 1,700. And I made that conversion as well and ended up with a figure of about 34,000 current rubles that I felt could be paid to me if I got all of my royalties, and it was this that I offered Solzhenitsyn.



When I sent the letter off to the New York Times, my attitude was one of hoping that they would print it, because about a year before, I had written another letter which I had sent to them, and they had not printed it. On that occasion my letter had been an open one to Kosygin and Brezhnev protesting the cancellation of a U.S. tour by [Mstislav] Rostropovich. I had tickets for the concert at UCLA, and I said that, as a musicgoer, I didn't think that his tour should have been cancelled, and it was cancelled because he had allowed Solzhenitsyn to live in a small cottage in the country where he had his own country house.

To my astonishment, the New York Times didn't print my letter as a letter but made a four-column feature story out of it, with photographs. I'm going to give you copies of that material because I think it's relevant to this. And as I found out, it became a story that went around the world. I was called by Time, Newsweek, BBC, and it was broadcast by Radio Free Europe, Voice of America, and Voice of Liberty. A friend teaching in Japan wrote me about it, and I heard from friends in France, Israel, and other countries. I have been told before that I have no sense of publicity, and this was an apparent example of it because it never occurred to me that it was that newsworthy; but in the eyes of the Times and other people, apparently,



one of the Hollywood Ten doing that was something unusual.

In Moscow at that time there was a winter arts festival which was being opened by the minister of culture, a Madame Furtseva. She was told of my offer by Western reporters, and said that she didn't know anything about it and that there was no precedent for it. But she then went on to say, "Our fellow countryman, Solzhenitsyn, doesn't live badly. He has received the Nobel Prize and bought more than one car for himself, and, honestly speaking, he isn't in need of charity, believe me." Well, this was contrary to what Solzhenitsyn had said, and what he said in response to this was that he didn't have a car (apparently he had had one briefly and had had to sell it to live on it), but when Furtseva said the word honestly, what she was doing at that time was building a country house for herself by appropriating state funds. And this was brought to light, and she was dismissed from her post as minister of culture.

At that time Robert Penn Warren and Bernard Malamud stated that they also would offer their royalties to Solzhenitsyn, and, as a result, I know that a book of Robert Penn Warren's was canceled--a book that was supposed to be published in the Soviet Union was canceled. At that time there also was cancellation of a book of mine that was going to be published in the German Democratic Republic.



GARDNER: Which one?

MALTZ: They were going to issue a new volume of short stories. But now they've again started to print me in the German Democratic Republic, but not in the Soviet Union; in the Soviet Union I'm finished.

GARDNER: That must be a rare double: to be blacklisted in both the United States and in the Soviet Union. I wonder. . . . [laughter]

MALTZ: Yes, it didn't occur to me. [laughter] Yes. Yes, I suppose so. No, there may have been other instances. Well, yes, there were because Howard Fast, really, was in a situation of just about both. You know, he was really in that situation after he left. . . . Now, this whole business about Solzhenitsyn came as I was at work on my novel The Eyewitness Report, and I want to give just a little more background for that.

In 1968 two events, two political events, happened that had great moment. One, of course, was the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia, the attempt of the Czech people, led by the Czech Communist party, to have communism with a human face, and this was smashed in the summer by Russian troops who came in and put in a Stalinist regime. I was tremendously indignant about that and was very aware of something that happened in Moscow. Eight persons gathered on Red Square around an ancient monument and sat down with small banners, protesting the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Within





minutes secret police were running from all sides of Red Square, and they proceeded to beat some of them and tried to arouse crowd hatred for them, and they hustled them into cabs and took them away. All of them received one degree of punishment or another. One of them, Litvinov, a scientist who was the grandson of the great Russian diplomat [Maxim Maximovich Litvinov], was sent into Siberian exile for three years. And several of them were put into psychiatric institutions. I used this event as the opening scene of my novel. And so I combined the events of Czechoslovakia as the initial platform for this drama of someone put into a psychiatric institution.

The second event of that year, which affected me enormously, was the outbreak of official anti-Semitism in Poland. This came about because there was a struggle for power between the head of the secret police, and the secretary of the Polish Communist party and head of the government, [Wladyslaw] Gomulka. (By the way, I got my information for this not only from reading but from a Polish friend who came here on a brief visit and who told me exactly what had happened.) The secret-police chief had used data he had been gathering for a long time as part of an anti-Semitic campaign to blame Gomulka in connection with certain student riots which occurred in Poland. It so happens that many of the older Communist



leaders in Poland who had been members of the Communist party before World War II were married to Jewish women, because there had been Jewish women in that prewar party and there had been few, apparently, women who were not Jewish, and so they had married. Gomulka, in order to fight this, and in order to blame Jews for the riots, proceeded to order the dismissal of all Jews from posts in Poland. My friend told me of a general . . . no, I forget whether he was a general or a colonel . . . who had been in East Germany on some mission important to the Polish government and who had accomplished it successfully and returned. He was given a decoration with one hand and dismissed from the army with the other, and was now on a small pension. My publisher, whom I spoke about earlier, was also dismissed from his post and was on a small pension. Scientists and university educators and professors were out. They were not persecuted in any other way, they were not sent to prison; but they were dismissed, and they were allowed to leave the country provided they said that they were going to Israel. That was the only way in which they would be let out. Well, along with others, I joined in public protest at this, and I thought it very revelatory that the Soviet Union, which considered that it had to interfere in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia, did not consider that this policy of governmental anti-Semitism



was anything to be concerned about in Poland. And I'd say that we stop at this point.

GARDNER: Okay.



TAPE NUMBER: XXV, SIDE TWO

JANUARY 26, 1979 [video session]

GARDNER: Now, if you'd like to pick up where we left off. . . .

MALTZ: Yes, I would. I'll start with a couple of things that go back. One comment on the American Communist party: from the very first that I knew anything about it, it denounced all forms of racism and applied itself to this in many different ways--in all of its educational work, in the way it handled demonstrations, in the fact that peoples of all ethnic backgrounds were part of the organization and so on. And it's a sign of the corruption of that party that when in 1968 there was an eruption of official anti-Semitism in Poland, it was absolutely silent about it. And it has remained silent about the clear manifestations of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union today. Just that point.

Now, also a minor correction about my film work. I said last time, I think, that I had had only one screenplay produced of those I wrote in the period between '64 and '78. Actually, three were produced, but I don't count two because of what happened to them. The one I mentioned as having been produced was Two Mules for Sister Sara, which was written to be a comedy with some drama in it; but the director, Don Siegel, turned it into a melodrama with some





comedy in it because he didn't know how to handle comedy. The second was Beguiled, with Clint Eastwood in it, and that was produced but I removed my name from it because they rewrote my screenplay and turned it into a piece of trash. And the third, from which I unfortunately didn't remove my name, was an equal piece of trash called Scalawag with Kirk Douglas, but I understood that it was going to be a children's film and it turned out not to be anything--not a children's film, not an adult's film--with what was done to it, and so that's the third film.

GARDNER: Two Mules for Sister Sara--will you be coming back to that later?

MALTZ: No, no.

GARDNER: That got very good reviews at the time that it came out.

MALTZ: You know, I don't really remember. I think the reviews called it, let's say, an effective entertainment. That's all it was, a passing entertainment. But it could have been very delightful if it had been played with a deft comedy touch, which was what I'd intended, and in certain places with farcical touches. But Siegel would take a scene designed to be funny, and he'd turn it into a piece of drama--a melodrama, rather, because he doesn't know how to direct with humor. And I say this with great deliberation since there's a bit of a cult around him, which he doesn't deserve.



I want to make one note which is a kind of a necessary footnote on my novel A Tale of One January, which was not published in the United States but published in England and other countries. There is a story told by a character in that novel which is identical with a story told by a character in The Deputy by Hochhuth, and the reason for it is this. I got the story of A Tale of One January from a woman Dounia Wasserstrom, who had been in Auschwitz and had been the secretary to a gestapo officer. She told me this terrifying story.

One day a group of about, I think, eighteen or twenty-odd Jewish children, who had been hidden by Christian Polish families and had been discovered, were brought into Auschwitz. This was the men's camp, not Birkenau, where the gas ovens were. One of the children had a large apple-- he was playing with it, he was rolling it and running after it. Dounia's boss came out of the building and stood looking at the children. And then he walked over to this child with the apple, and he picked him . . . swung him up by grabbing his ankles, and bashed his head against a wall. Then he picked up the apple and put it in his pocket. Later in the day, his wife and his small child came to visit him, and he took the child on his lap and fondled it, and then reached into his desk drawer and took out the apple and gave it to his child.



Now, after she had told me this story and while I was writing it, she was called to testify in a trial of this gestapo agent and others who had been caught in Frankfurt, I think, in West Germany. She went there and testified and told this story about that man. And Hochhuth used it in The Deputy, which was produced before my novel was published in England. I had to write this explanation to my publisher who said, "How come that's the identical story?" So I just wanted to make that little note.

Now, in view of what I did with Solzhenitsyn, I want to make a comment about his political thinking as he has revealed it since being expelled from the Soviet Union in February 1974. In an interview that he gave the French paper Le Monde on May 31, 1975, he was very critical of the United States for ending the war in Vietnam. Because we did, he said, we were condemning millions there to concentration camps. He said nothing about the Vietnamese whom we were killing . . . oh, I had a note on the back that I've lost . . . that we were killing, or the land we were rendering useless for a hundred years by chemical defoliation, or what the continuation of the war was doing to American servicemen and American society. It was clear that he had only one social and political goal and that it dominated his thinking: at whatever cost, all Communist regimes had to be defeated and destroyed.



Now, this theme that all Communist regimes were evil incarnate and the enemy of humankind was developed by him further in two speeches he made to the AFL-CIO on June 30, '75, in Washington, and a week later, in New York. I taped the first one. Among other things, he stated the following: one, the United States should not have recognized the Soviet Union in 1933; two, that the United States should not have aided the Russians in World War II (the significance of this was hair-raising because it was preferable to have had Hitler take over the Soviet Union rather than have a continuation of the Communist regime); three, the United States, France and Britain won World War II (he made no mention of the Russian role in that war, and this incredible omission is a revealing indication, to me, of his frenzy on the subject); four, the United States should now stop trade with the Soviet Union, and there should not be détente. The West should make no treaties with the Soviet Union. His thesis that the Soviet economy depends totally on United States trade and loans is as false to the facts as his assertion that World War II was won by the United States, France, and Britain. He ignores the fact that from 1947 until the mid-sixties, and yet the Soviet Union grew stronger year by year. . . . (I want to get a cushion. And . . . my back . . . it's that couch; that isn't my favorite seat.)





On May 24, '76, he gave a TV interview in Spain, when Franco was still head of the government, in which he told the Spanish people that they enjoyed absolute freedom, and he declared that the Falangist victory in the Spanish civil war had been a victory for the concept of Christianity. In June he made another speech during which he attacked workers who went out on strike.

Now, it's clear then that Solzhenitsyn is a kind of Russian Foster Dulles. He's a clerical reactionary who is willing to link arms with anyone, including fascists, so long as they oppose the Soviet regime. I didn't know this about him when I offered him my support in '72. If I had known that he was willing, in retrospect . . . no, if I had known that he was willing to make common cause with Hitler, I would not have lent him my support. However, I didn't know it, and I don't in the least regret what I did because in the events from '64 to '74, the Soviet government was wrong and he was right. Now, on to another point.

One of the changes in the cultural scene in the passage of the years between, say, the thirties to the seventies, which was for the worse in our country, is that in the thirties it was possible to raise the curtain on a play with an investment of, say, \$25,000. And nowadays, the same play would require \$250,000. This has resulted in limiting what playwrights can do in the theater. Producers ask for one-set plays with four characters. And I know,



for instance, that when I wrote my play Monsieur Victor about Victor Hugo and I started around 1956, it was possible to do what I did--have several sets and a large cast of characters. Now there's practically no chance whatsoever for a play of that size. And when you think of the literature of the theater, this is enormously limiting. Similarly, when I first started writing short stories, there were quite a number of magazines that published and paid for adult short stories. . . . To say serious stories would exclude, let's say, amusing short stories and I don't mean to do that. Now that number has shrunk by about 70 percent. And that again begins to close off a whole area of writing which is the field of the short story. Now, in 1971, for instance, I published a volume of collected stories, Afternoon in the Jungle, and I got some very good reviews in Look and the L.A. Times and several other places, but it wasn't 10 percent of the reviews I had gotten with my first book of short stories in 1938. There are now fewer newspapers that review books at all, many fewer short stories are published, and many fewer are read; and yet the short story has often been the ground where a writer first begins to find his footing.

One of the things that happened, beginning around 1965 and continuing on to today, was that the years of the



blacklist and of the Hollywood Ten were revisited. Starting around 1968, there was an article in the L.A. Times magazine, the Sunday magazine, and since then there's been a steady increase of interest in the Hollywood Ten. There were other articles, including a long one in the New York Times Magazine by Victor Navasky, the present editor of the Nation. And there were many requests for interviews by people writing books on the era and requests from students doing Ph.D. and master's theses. In '73 I was invited to speak at Stanford, and I am fairly sure I wouldn't have been able to get a drink of water on the campus ten years earlier. But now I was introduced with some fanfare, and the same thing happened at a conference staged by UC Berkeley in '75. In fact, in the film industry it started to become chic to have been blacklisted. For instance, a radio, TV, and film writer, Mac Benoff, who had been a cooperative witness before the committee, and incidentally had been disowned by his own father, evidently had had several years of unemployment at a certain period. And in the seventies he proudly claimed that he had been blacklisted.

I laughed when I saw that in print, but I became furious when my onetime close friend Michael Blankfort had the gall to lie in the same way this past year. There was an article about him in the L.A. Times Book Review on June 25, '78. The author, Jay Martin, made use of biographical



data that he could only have gotten from Blankfort. The portrait he presented to his readers was of a man of integrity who, testifying before the House Committee, had affirmed with pride his many activities devoted to social change and who was blacklisted for a time. I wrote a letter to the Times that was published on July 16 in which I pointed out that Blankfort had a writing credit for a film produced each year from 1950 through 1956--the worst of the McCarthy years; but no blacklisted writer got credit in those years. In actual fact, when Blankfort completed his testimony, during which he had repudiated a good many of the social causes he once supported, the chairman applauded him for helping the committee. Hypocrisy and roguery fit together very well.

Now on to another point which is very important to me and which is not over, really. There was, for me and for many others, a most extraordinary development in postblacklist history when Dalton Trumbo made a speech in March 1970, and I want to read part of that speech. This is to be found in his book Additional Dialogue, and it's at the very end. Trumbo received the Writers Guild annual Laurel Award, quote, "For that member of the Guild who has advanced the literature of the motion picture through the years and who has made outstanding contributions to the profession of the screenwriter." In the course of his





remarks after accepting the award, Trumbo said this:

I presume that over half of our members have no memory of that blacklist because they were children when it began, or not yet born. To them I would only say this: that the blacklist was a time of evil, and that no one on either side who survived it came through untouched by evil. Caught in a situation that had passed beyond the control of mere individuals, each person reacted as his nature, his needs, his convictions, and his particular circumstances compelled him to. There was bad faith and good, honesty and dishonesty, courage and cowardice, selflessness and opportunism, wisdom and stupidity, good and bad on both sides; and almost every individual involved, no matter where he stood, combined some or all of these antithetical qualities in his own person, in his own acts. When you who are in your forties or younger look back with curiosity on that dark time, as I think occasionally you should, it will do no good to search for villains or heroes or saints or devils because there were none; there were only victims. Some suffered less than others, some grew and some diminished, but in the final tally we were all victims because almost without exception each of us felt compelled to say things he did not want to say, to do things he did not want to do, to deliver and receive wounds he truly did not want to exchange. That is why none of us--right, left, or center--emerged from that long nightmare without sin.

That's the end of the quotation, which is of course a very eloquent one, but wrongheaded. I was not present when he made this speech, but I read in the newspaper the next morning that he had received the Laurel Award, and I telephoned him immediately. When he told me about the speech and about the great reception it had received, he



omitted any mention of what I have just read. I didn't know it then, but it was to lead to a public dispute and to something very regrettable, personally, between us. I was enormously disturbed when I finally read this. For me, Trumbo had wiped out all differences between those who opposed the committee, which was promoting thought control, and those who supported the committee. He equated those who had suffered blacklisting, with all of its consequences, with those who had helped promote it. I was bewildered. Since he was the most prominent member of the Ten, and since he had made this speech at the annual meeting of the guild, it had the effect of absolving the informers in the audience and in completely confusing the younger writers who had no basis for estimating the situation. With a Christ-like air, Trumbo had said that everyone was a victim of the times. To me this was philosophic nonsense. We were at that moment conducting our foul war in Vietnam. Was the pilot who dropped napalm on a Vietnamese child equally a victim of the times as the child? To understand all is not to forgive all. Is there no right and wrong in what people do in life?

Exactly a year after Trumbo's speech, Elia Kazan published a novel called The Assassins. In an interview, Kazan, who had been an informer, said, "I didn't find any heroes or villains in life, so I didn't write any. We're



all victims." In another portion of the interview, he said, "Everybody is culpable, no good guys and bad guys." Commenting on this in a letter to the L.A. Times, Richard Powell, a TV writer, said, "'We are all guilty' is a rationale no society can afford. It cripples advocacy by decent men and puts no rein at all on the indecent. If the inmate is equally guilty with his guard, then how shall we ever do away with concentration camps?"

However, I knew that there was no point in calling Trumbo at that moment about it because Trumbo was a man of very strong opinions, and under the circumstances, with the reception that his speech had received, I didn't think that he would be capable of some serious talk with me about it. I called some friends who had been at the dinner, and they reported to me that all of the informers present had been ecstatic with delight. Trumbo, the best known of the Hollywood Ten, had absolved them. I called Adrian Scott, who had been married in Trumbo's house. He agreed with me but said he wouldn't talk to Trumbo about it; he didn't want to quarrel with him. Adrian did tell me something I had not known: that when Trumbo traveled, he carried a Bible with him. That, to me, was fascinating. I didn't feel I could really interpret it, but obviously it had some meaning.

I remember no one I spoke to who agreed with him. One or two tried to, as it were, sympathetically interpret



him while not really agreeing with him. But all of them said they were not going to discuss it with him. And their reasons were twofold, although they didn't have to state them to me: one, they admired him so much that they didn't feel like crossing swords with him; secondly, even if they had wanted to cross swords, they were afraid of him. Trumbo could be incredibly cutting and vitriolic. And he had a formidable mind, personality, and tongue. I knew that I would talk to him sooner or later, but there seemed no point to it at the moment, and I let it drift.

It so happened that both of us were very busy, and we didn't happen to meet at any social or public gathering, and so time passed. And it was not until July of the next year that I called him and went to see him. I told him what I felt about his speech. And Dalton's reaction was that, well, I felt that way and that was my privilege, but he knew that a great many others didn't, and there was no point in discussing it. That was on July 30, but two weeks later, on August 15, we were together at a memorial meeting for Herbert Biberman. Those of us of the Hollywood Ten in the area spoke--Adrian, Lester Cole, Trumbo, and myself--and I taped the meeting. I was astonished to hear one thing Trumbo said about Herbert Biberman. He had been talking about the fact that Herbert was deeply interested in people, that if he asked about





your family, he truly wanted to know. He then said the following (I am quoting from the tape): "He was a man who, during a trip to Europe, encountered someone who had informed on him. And they talked for an hour and a half. And Herbert was interested in the man." I knew Herbert quite well and this astonished me. I simply could not believe that the man I knew would have talked for an hour and a half with an informer. Two days later, Gale Sondergaard, Herbert's widow, came to our home, and I asked her about it. She said, well, it was nothing like that. Herbert wanted an actor, Stephen Boyd, for a film he was going to shoot called Slaves. Boyd was in Madrid in a film being directed by Dmytryk. Herbert got in touch with Boyd and then went to Madrid to see him. After their talk Boyd invited Herbert to a cast party that was to be held that night. Herbert declined, explaining that he didn't want to meet Dmytryk. The next morning, as he was checking out of the hotel, he heard a voice saying, "Why, Herbert, what are you doing here?" Herbert turned and saw Dmytryk. He replied sharply, "I'm proving there's more than one way to get to Spain." This was their conversation. And since that was Herbert's only trip to Europe in all of those years, it was this that Trumbo had blown up into an hour and a half of conversation with an informer.

It was my belief then, and I have not changed it since, that Trumbo said this about Herbert in order to



buttress his own position about informers, which I had challenged. He was doing it, moreover, before what one could call a captive audience: that is to say, all of Herbert's old friends, Trumbo's old friends, the people of the Left who remained. However, I didn't draw full conclusions from this until well over a year later. And at the time, I ascribed it to a sort of egotistical caprice on Trumbo's part.

However, there were further developments. On various occasions I saw in print Trumbo's phrase "only victims" used by one person or another. Later in 1971 an important book appeared, Thirty Years of Treason by Eric Bentley. The frontispiece quote was from Trumbo's Laurel Award speech, and it began, "The blacklist was a time of evil," and it quoted the core of the position to which I objected. The next year Robert Vaughn's book entitled Only Victims appeared. It was now unmistakably clear that Trumbo's position was getting very wide acceptance, and I regarded this as an absolutely dreadful perversion of history.

I decided that it was absolutely necessary for me to make clear that there was not a wholesale acceptance of his position by other people. I wrote a statement and the question was, how would I get it into print? I thought of placing it as an advertisement in Variety. But then a call came from a journalist, Victor Navasky. He was



writing an article on the Hollywood Ten for the New York Times Sunday magazine, and he wanted an interview. He came to my house early in December, shortly after I had written the statement. I showed it to him and asked him if he would like to use it. He said he would and asked if he could show it to Trumbo. He had an appointment with Trumbo for the next day. I said that of course he could. Navasky's article on the Ten appeared in the New York Times Sunday magazine on March 25, '73. But before that, something happened that caused me to open a private correspondence with Trumbo.

The guild had a series of meetings in which individual writers spoke and one of their films was shown. Trumbo was one of the featured speakers and Blankfort was announced as the moderator. I again was astonished. I couldn't go to the county museum auditorium where it was held, but I wanted to know what would be said, and I had someone go for me with a tape recorder. The result of that was the decision to write him a letter with nothing withheld. I need to mention that we'd become quite close as friends, and my letter was not written impulsively--quite the contrary. This is a portion of what I wrote:

I think the time has come just now to write you a blunt letter. I cannot stomach your current behavior. It bewilders me, saddens me, outrages me. If I had not for so many years admired you, liked you, and rejoiced in the bond between us, I would not bother





to write this letter. Indeed if you were not today in so many, many ways a man whose public behavior still commands my respect and admiration, I also would not bother to write to you. How can you be so blind to what you're doing? I recently received the Time of the Toad from your publisher, undoubtedly sent to me at your request. I reread it with care. It was a magnificent polemic when you first wrote it; it now has stood the test of twenty years and is no less magnificent. Yet how bewildering that at the same time that this book comes to me in the mail the author sits on a platform of a theater, where one of his films is to be shown as part of a retrospective program, and listens with a satisfied smile to the remarks of the moderator, who ate toad meat before the committee with unctuous relish. "I never was a fellow traveler of the Communist party," Blankfort said, in effect, to the committee. "I actually was a fellow traveler of yours." Now, twenty years later, in a voice greased with similar unction, he praises his friend Dalton Trumbo from A to Z, and Trumbo sits complacently. With what does Blankfort conclude his remarks? What else but the seemingly Christ-like quotation from your Laurel Awards speech about that time in American life when there were no villains or heroes, only victims. Naturally, naturally. Trumbo has absolved the Blankfort. If Blankfort had to eat toad meat, it was only because he was a victim. And Kazan joyously echoes this in his latest novel: everybody is culpable. Interviewed about the writing of the book, he states, "I didn't find any heroes or villains in life so I didn't write any. We're all victims." Now, where did that phrasing originate? And why does Kazan find it so true and felicitous? How come this philosophic bond between Trumbo and Kazan, Trumbo and Blankfort? How on earth can the author of Time of the Toad be merry with those he once pissed upon?

That's the quote from my letter.

The result of my letter was a private correspondence that continued over a period of several months. However,





in a letter to me on February 7, 1973, Trumbo's tone suddenly changed. Previously we had been two close friends who were engaged in a serious dispute about issues of moral and philosophical significance. The debate between us was sharp, but it was civilized. Suddenly, in this letter, Trumbo's tone became one of bitter sarcasm with an underlying rage. At the end of it he broke off all relations with me.

This was not the first time Trumbo had done this with a friend; it was something of a pattern in his behavior, the cause of which I never knew. But I recall the time in the sixties when he had told me that there had been an irreparable break between him and Hugo Butler. Hugo Butler was much closer to him than I was, and in 1963, when Trumbo and I both happened to be in Rome at the same time doing some work, we went to dinner at the home of Harold J. Smith, who was one of the coauthors of The Defiant Ones and other screenplays. At the end of the dinner, Trumbo suddenly erupted in a personal attack on Smith so contemptuous and venomous as to be inexplicable. He told me later that it had been calculated because the Smiths had been annoying him, and he didn't want them to continue. Later, he attacked his close friend Ian Hunter.\* Therefore, his breaking off

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\* Trumbo later resumed close friendships with Butler and Hunter.



relations with me did not disturb me. I regretted it, of course, but this was Trumbo's problem, not mine.

I replied to his letter on March 22. He never received it because it arrived at his home when he was in Jamaica working on the script of the movie Papillon. Cleo, his wife, returned it to me unopened. When Trumbo returned from Jamaica, it was for the purpose of undergoing urgent surgery. From then on until his death he was an invalid, and I didn't want to send him a letter that I knew would enrage him. I think I have to change my. . . . [changing tape] Guess it had run out a while ago.

While Trumbo was still alive, Bruce Cook, his biographer, interviewed me. Trumbo had given him the correspondence to read without, of course, my last letter. Cook told me that he considered it an important correspondence that he would like to publish as an appendix to the biography. I said I would be willing to have it published but only if it included my final letter. I explained what had happened to it and suggested that he consult Cleo about it. He said he would and that I would hear from him before he left Los Angeles. I didn't hear. I sent several letters to him. There was no reply. I finally sent a registered letter with a return receipt requested. I got the receipt but no reply from him. I was afraid he might do something very unfair, which he had mentioned to me as a possibility--namely, publish Trumbo's letters and summarize my replies.



This was, I understood, legally permissible, however unfair. He did this to a small degree in the biography, but I wouldn't say that he had been unfair to me. However, he has rather a number of errors in his references to me in the book, some of them due to what Trumbo told him, and some of his own.

Trumbo's death in September '76 was one of a series of deaths of old friends that's now becoming larger and larger. The first was that of my very dear friend Philip Stevenson. The next year it was Hugo Butler, my neighbor and fellow blacklistee in Mexico for seven years; and then Guy Endore; then Herbert Biberman in 1971; to be followed a year later by Adrian Scott. All of these men were so much a part of my life that it's as though trees in an orchard surrounding my home had been cut down. The view is now less pleasing. I mention this only because I, like everyone else, have been intellectually aware that anyone who is long-lived must experience the loss of friends. But only now do I feel it . . . and feeling it is much keener than merely knowing it intellectually.

It's a pleasant coincidence that in my seventieth year a book about my work has been published for school libraries. It's by Jack Salzman, a scholar in the English department of Hofstra University. He got in touch with me about ten years ago, saying that he wanted to write a



study of my work. I supplied him with biographical material and other data, but his judgments on my work are his own, without any consultation with me. The book, with my name as title, is in the Twayne series of studies of American authors and has been published by G. K. Hall and Company, of Boston.

Unless you have questions, I think I'll close this history with a projection of what I would like to be my epitaph: on the last day of his life, an hour before his death, he was listening to Schubert's quartet number 13 in A minor, while he wrote down the name of a book he wanted to read, the idea for a short story he wanted to write, and the date of a holiday he hoped to take with his wife.

GARDNER: That's such a lovely thing, I wouldn't think of asking anything else. Thank you very much.

MALTZ: Thank you, Joel.





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